Mother Dear,

Dearest Mater,

Mum

Wartime letters from James Fulton Yeomans
to Ada Pearle Yeomans, 1942-1945

Compiled and Edited by
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In memory of Jim and his mother Ada,
whose letters embody reassurance and courage
in ordinary moments shared freely
and extraordinary moments left unwritten.

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Cast of Characters

Here are some of the key individuals featured or mentioned in these letters:

James Fulton Yeomans (Jim) 1920 - 2003
The author of the letters. At the start of the collection in 1942, Jim is a social, sometimes restless, young man working as a Writer (clerk) at Flinders Naval Depot. He is observant, proud of his naval service, and deeply committed to comforting his mother, often downplaying the dangers he faces while detailing the minutiae of daily life.

Ada Pearle Yeomans (née Hadley) 1884 - 1972
The recipient of the letters and Jim's mother. She is the central anchor of his correspondence, living at 61 Pine Street, Randwick, throughout most of the war. Jim's letters are a constant effort to reassure her, keep her informed (within the bounds of censorship), and maintain a connection to home. She sends him parcels of food, clothing, and newspapers, which are vital for his morale.

Other Family Members

- **James Yeomans Snr:** *Jim's late father and the husband of Ada. In 1932 when Jim was just 12, James was killed in a tragic train accident at Mittagong.*
- **Percival Yeomans (Perce, P.A.):** *Jim's older brother by 15 years. A mining engineer and businessman, Perce is a more distant but respected figure in the letters. During the war, he moved with his family to a farm in North Richmond, where he went on to develop Keyline, a plan for the sustainable development of landscapes that would revolutionise rural land design.*
- **Linda Smallcombe (Merle):** *Jim's older sister by 13 years. During the early part of the war, Jim stays with Merle and her husband Cyril on his weekend leaves in Melbourne, making her a central figure in his social life. Jim describes her as prone to worrying, but he is clearly fond of her and concerned for her well-being, especially after Cyril enlists. Tragically, Cyril died suddenly from illness at the family home in Pine Street, Randwick in early 1945, followed shortly by the death of the couple's only son, Raymond.*
- **Florice May Owers (Bubs):** *Jim's second older sister by 10 years. Bubs married Charles Owers, who served in the 1st Australian Field Ambulance at Gallipoli during WWI, winning the Military Cross. Bubs is a frequent and devoted correspondent, though Jim humorously notes her notoriously bad spelling and questionable choice of items for aid packages. She is portrayed as a caring but anxious sister who follows the war news intently.*
- **Perce Curvey:** *Perce is Jim's cousin, the son of Aunty Maud. Before the war, they were on friendly terms, spending time together going to the pictures. His fate becomes a recurring and anxious thread throughout the letters, as the family receives conflicting reports about his well-being before he is officially declared "missing" and later confirmed to be a Prisoner of War held by the Japanese.*
- **Tom Yeomans:** *Jim's uncle on his father's side. Tom served in WWI in both Gallipoli and France, then became involved in gold mining in New Guinea and later founded the South Pacific Brewery.*

Australian Friends and Shipmates

- **Mr and Mrs Marris:** *The Marrises are friends of Ada and are mentioned in several letters as generous senders of aid parcels. Jim stayed in the UK with Mrs Marris's sister Mrs. Cubbins and her friend Lily Stanghan.*

- **Bill Bain (Pinto):** *A close friend of Jim's from the Bronte Surf Life Saving Club who also serves in the navy. Pinto is a recurring character in the letters; Jim often makes plans to meet up with him, follows his movements between ships like HMAS Australia, and they share a common bond as surf club "boys" in the service.*

- **George McGrath:** *Another friend of Jim's from the Bronte SLSC, known for writing "breezy", witty letters. He served in the navy on the Hospital Ship Centaur and survived after the ship was sunk without warning by a torpedo fired from a Japanese submarine. George became a long distance runner in later life and won a number of gold medals in the 5000 and 10000 metres at the World Veteran Olympics in the 1970s.*

- **Col Curtis:** *A fellow "Writer" and "pal" on the HMAS Shropshire. Their friendship is solidified during a memorable leave to Scotland, where they stay with the Alison family. Col is a key figure in Jim's life at sea, sharing the daily routines and responsibilities of their clerical role. After the war, Col became secretary to the Queensland Premier and later Qld. Agent General in London.*

- **Col Ayres:** *A friend from Jim's pre-war civilian life at N.S.T. who joins the army. He and Jim meet up for an active weekend in Melbourne while on leave. Col represents a strong link to Jim's life before the war, and their correspondence helps them stay connected despite being in different branches of the service.*

- **Miss Goodwin (Goody):** *A persistent and friendly female correspondent from Jim's social circle back home. She is portrayed as a good-natured, if slightly exasperating, friend who keeps both Jim and Ada updated with gossip. Her letter asking, "how many girls HAVE you got anyway?" highlights Jim's active social life.*

- **The Tracey Family:** *After Merle leaves Melbourne, this family in Brighton becomes Jim's regular "billet" for weekend leave. Councillor Treacy, his wife, and their daughters (Madeleine, Eunice, and Margaret) provide Jim with a home away from home, and he frequently mentions spending enjoyable and comfortable weekends with them.*

- **Chief "Tug" Wilson:** *Jim's superior officer in the Drafting Office at Flinders Naval Depot. In the early letters, "Tug" is a prominent figure of authority who lends Jim his bike, signs his leave requests, and whose humorous antics (like constantly breaking glasses) lighten the mood of the otherwise monotonous depot life.*

Friends in the UK

- **Lily Stanghan:** *A family friend living in Luton, England. Jim's reunion with her after many years is a highlight of his first leave in the UK. She provides him with a warm, home-like welcome, cooks for him, and worries about him being cold, acting as a surrogate maternal figure during his time in England.*

- **Mrs Cubbins:** *The sister of Ada's friend, Mrs. Marris, living in Cheshire, England. Jim stays with her and her daughter Arline during his UK leave. She represents the network of hospitality that connected Australian servicemen to familiar faces even thousands of miles from home.*

- **Dean:** *A "very nice Welsh girl" Jim meets while on leave in North Wales. She is an excellent dancer and shares similar tastes with Jim, becoming a significant romantic interest and a regular correspondent during his time in the UK.*

- **The Alison Family:** *The Scottish family in Burntisland, Fife, who host Jim and Col Curtis on their leave. Their hospitality gives Jim a memorable and positive experience of Scotland, and he remains in touch with them after his visit.*

Introduction

Jim Yeomans, or "Poppa" as he was known to his grandchildren, was never short on stories for those who would listen. On the whole, these were not boisterous tales of fishing expeditions or sporting triumphs shared over the dinner table to uproarious laughter, or collective groans. Rather, Jim's stories came during quieter moments: unhurried walks through Oatley Park looking for flannel flowers beneath the eucalyptus, or in the hushed atmosphere of the rumpus room at Marine Drive as he chalked his cue with practiced hands.

With gentle authority, he would gesture towards the painting of Shropshire hanging behind the billiards table and ensure his listener understood the basics: port from starboard, bow from stern. Then, pointing at different parts of the painted ship (never call it a boat!), Jim might explain the various machinery of war that had once been his daily reality. The anti-aircraft "pom pom" guns, the Oerlikon cannons with their distinctive "ack-ack" percussion as they defended against kamikazes, and the devastating 4 and 8-inch guns that had bombarded enemy ships and shore defences across New Guinea, Indonesia and the Philippines. His hands would stretch wide to demonstrate the impossible heft of these 116-kilogram shells that required a team of men to load.

Aside from the battles and bombardment though, there were other gems that portrayed a different side to my grandfather. Jim once recounted how, after travelling in comfort across the UK by Pullman Rail, he had stowed the used sheet from his sleeping berth in his luggage because "they were just going to replace it the next day anyway, and they were far more comfortable than those issued by the navy!"[1] Much of his astute scheming is detailed in his letters to

[1]The loss of this pilfered sheet is lamented in his letter from 30th Oct. 1943

his mother, although one gets the impression that more of the 'below board' plans may have been omitted.

Some tales went over my head entirely. My 8-year old self would have had a hard time connecting my elderly, ovaltine-drinking grandfather, marching besuited at ANZAC Day to the bronzed surf-lifesaver based at Flinders Naval Depot (FND) whom we meet in the first letters of this collection. Jim was very knowledgeable about the prices and availability of nylon stockings, a much sought after care package commodity during wartime, especially for Australian personnel trying to keep pace with their cashed up 'Yank' counterparts. He mentioned how maintaining a piano repertoire of popular music was a surefire hit at parties ('Stardust' and 'Alligator Crawl' were two favourites). It starts to become clear when details of his extensive correspondence with ladies in Australia and across the world come to light.

This collection of 130 letters, typed and handwritten over four years of naval service during World War II, offers something unique. Unlike official histories or memoirs written decades later, letters are immediate, authentic and deeply personal. Despite offering at times only limited detail (in Jim's case due to the naval censor who could not risk sea-mail being intercepted), and written under the pressures of war, letters served as vital morale boosters for defence personnel and their families. The Royal Australian Navy went to great lengths to ensure delivery –passing mailbags through chains of ships traversing routes often plagued by Japanese submarines.

For Ada at 61 Pine Street, anxiously scanning newspapers and radio reports, Jim's letters were reassurance. "Don't worry, don't fret about me and ignore the rumours!" he would write. Whatever he faced at sea, his ability to comfort his mother was at least something he could control and a role he evidently performed with a staunch pride. To evade the censor and reveal the location of his ship, Jim and Ada invented coded salutations, several of which serve as the title for this collection: "Mother Dear" referred to New Zealand or vicinity, "Dearest Mater" was the Mid-Pacific Ocean, and so on.[2]

Jim's writing is observant and curious, often taking a deliberate journalistic, foreign correspondent-style tone for not only his mother but for close fam-

[2]The full list of codes is included in the chapter: 'From Pollywog to Piccadilly: The Journey to England (October – December 1942)'

ily and friends with whom Ada may have been sharing the letters. Despite regularly coming under threat, whether from German bombing raids while in London or from the Japanese navy, and having many friends and acquaintances killed, injured or held captive as PoWs, his writing contains no hint of hatred or animosity towards the foe, indeed preferring to portray their efforts with signature humour: "...the sirens wail heralding the arrival of our old "friend" Jerry so I'll let you know how we get on later..." or "I note from the news that our old friend Tojo (the Prime Minister of Japan) has been ousted which is a bad business as we were becoming used to fighting (him)." This attitude did not change after the war, with Jim making trips to visit both Germany & Japan, establishing lasting friendships, and billeting German & Japanese students at his home in Oatley.

The challenges Jim faced with his naval letter writing were manifold. While stationed at FND, the enemy was the boredom of waiting to be drafted, while at sea, interesting destinations and momentous events abounded but very little could be said. To give the reader additional context about concurrent events impacting Jim & HMAS Shropshire, I have included supplementary information in the form of footnotes. In one letter, Jim remarks with some frustration: "As usual my news is pretty poor, but I guess that as long as I write to tell you I'm feeling okay that's the main thing as far as you are concerned." Writing screed after screed with descriptions of the food you have eaten (ordinary), and the weather (hot and wet) must have been about as appetising as eating cans of "bully beef" every day for a month (reportedly a less palatable protein source than spam), with a side of powdered potato mash.

It was under these trying conditions –perhaps seated under the 8-inch guns on deck writing by the light of the moon and stars on middle watch, or under red lights after hours in the Ship's office on a typewriter clacking and squeaking with the effects of sea water –while preparing for a shore bombardment the next morning or anticipating kamikaze attacks – that some of Jim's best letters emerge. A letter on 17th Sep. 1944 contains beautifully poetic reflections on tropical sunrises, phosphorescent marine creatures by night, and how his time as an "old-veteran" seems soon to be coming to an end. Another letter describing "Xmas Day", sent on 17th Dec. 1944, is a rollicking read with lively and humourous depictions of festivities and frivolities onboard.

A keen amateur photographer, Jim's camera travelled with him on his voy-

ages and several of his photos from the war are included throughout the collection. In addition to Jim's originals, I have gathered images from the Australian War Memorial archives, the State Library of Victoria and other sources. These will help the reader imagine the war as Jim would have witnessed it, at FND, London or on Shropshire, especially in situations where expressive depictions of places were prohibited because of the risk of exposing troop movements if intercepted.

This collection includes two of Jim's written pieces published in the Naval Historical Review in the early 1990s, which date back to some of my earliest memories of my grandfather on his typewriter at his former Marine Drive residence, by then in his seventies. These are "HMAS Shropshire - WW2" (1994), which gives a brief history of the 'lucky ship' and its action in 'Tiger Territory', and "Scharnhorst - Life on the Other Side of the Mirror" (1991), a fascinating recount of Jim's discovery of the life of a sailor serving in the German Navy, included as an appendix.

As interesting as Jim's accounts of life aboard Shropshire or travelling in the US and the UK are (or often tedious, in the case of his time at FND), there is far more to be gleaned below the surface. Through this archive of weekly letters written over four years we witness the transformation of a young man. The Jim Yeomans that we meet at the beginning –the man of the Bronte Promenade and the dance hall, devastated at the loss of his prized pen and dissatisfied with the entertainments available to him in Melbourne, becomes a "shellback" who has sailed the world, a Leading Writer and veteran who, as HMAS Shropshire approached the Surigao Strait, mused about peace and home: "I suppose that although I grumble about present conditions, in a couple of years I'll have forgotten the seamy side and during a cold, windy September at home, will think wistfully perhaps of the everlasting Summer when the days rig was sandals and shorts only."

By war's end, this transformation was complete. After almost five years in the navy, and being bombarded by both enemy shells and mail from his many female correspondents, Jim was ready to settle down. Jim writes in late 1944: "At last I really feel as if I've shared in something "big" and that will no doubt help to shorten this tiresome old war. After being in on an epic show like this, I shan't feel awed in the presence of any "veteran" of any force or any War. After this lot, I'll be quite satisfied to be drafted back to shore –Sydney I hope!" Not

long after, Jim did return to Sydney, to be finally 'demobbed' at war's end and to meet his future wife, Lorna Ferguson.

When I embarked upon this project a year ago, I had little sense of its true scope. I had read only a handful of my grandfather's letters and could not have anticipated how easily he could expand an opening such as *"Not much to report this week..."* into three or four pages of typewritten detail. In a time when family updates are often reduced to a line or two on WhatsApp or a quick selfie, the care and constancy Jim showed in his correspondence stand as a remarkable example of how to nurture and sustain meaningful relationships. It was with a bittersweet sense of closure that I finished his final letter, dated 18 February 1945. The project was complete, and the year-long dialogue I have enjoyed with 'Poppa' had come to an end.

Editing this collection –now extending to some 500 pages– has been a challenging task, made possible only through the support of a few key people. In 2004, Kerry Smart painstakingly transcribed all of Jim's handwritten letters in preparation for their inclusion in the Australian War Memorial Archives. Those digital transcripts gave me a head start and allowed me to focus on the typewritten letters, which were, thankfully, easier to read. I am deeply grateful to my uncle, Lawrie Yeomans, and mother, Meg Sheahan, for their help in researching family history, dates, people, photographs and countless other details that enrich Jim's letters with invaluable context. My heartfelt thanks also goes to my wife Minting, who listened with patience and humour to hundreds of my second-hand anecdotes – I can only hope that you will give the originals another chance! And to Jim's many descendants and anyone else who may have stumbled upon this collection, I hope you enjoy getting to know my grandfather and his mother Ada as much as I have.

– Jonathan Sheahan, September 2025 –

HMAS Shropshire - WW2

Author: Jim Yeomans
Published: September 1994 edition of the Naval Historical Review

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HMAS SHROPSHIRE was a lucky ship! All drafts to the U.K. safely traversed the Atlantic at the height of U-Boat sinkings and not a man was lost through enemy action.

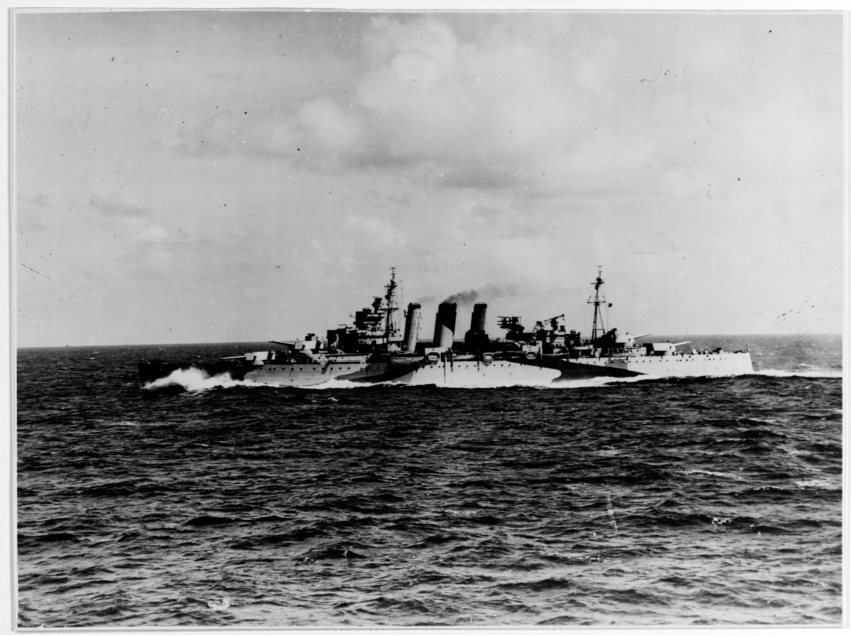
Soon after HMAS CANBERRA was sunk, the British Government announced its gift of a replacement cruiser which was to be renamed CANBERRA until it was learned that the U.S. Navy intended to honour its memory by naming a new heavy cruiser USS CANBERRA, so HMS SHROPSHIRE simply changed to HMAS.

At Chatham Dockyard far-reaching changes were made to SHROPSHIRE which included conversion to cafeteria messing, improvements to gunnery control, modernisation of all Radar and later rectification of a fault in transmission which enabled the ship to reach 32.6 knots.

Sailing for home from Scapa Flow on Friday, 13th August, 1943 SHROPSHIRE took her place in Task Force 74, based at Milne Bay with a mixture of Australian and US warships. Her campaign against Japan began in December 1943 in New Britain and then as part of the island-hopping strategy at a dozen locations in Dutch New Guinea and nearby islands.

Then in the small hours of 20th October, 1944 SHROPSHIRE was truly in 'Tiger Territory'! Stealing into Leyte Gulf in a vast assemblage of 470 ships,

she towed an unwelcome visitor – an ugly black mine, entangled with the port paravane. It was here that our new Radar proved its worth, much to the delight of our new skipper, Captain C.A.G. (Godfrey) Nichols, R.N.



HMAS Shropshire in 1943 after her transfer to the RAN. (Jim Yeomans)

On 25th October in Surigao Strait at 0323, allied destroyers led by HMAS ARUNTA attacked with torpedoes the fleet battle force of Admiral Nishimura. SHROPSHIRE opened fire with main armament on the bigger battleship, YAMASHIRO, and from 32 broadsides, over a period of 14 minutes, registered many hits on the Japanese flagship. This attracted fire from the Japanese flagship and several big shells tore noisily overhead. FUSO sank at 0338 and YAMASHIRO at 0419.

In this great overall sea battle of Leyte, SHROPSHIRE had become the only Australian warship ever to have fired its main gunnery at an enemy battleship and registered hits.

Only one Japanese destroyer was afloat at daybreak, firing defiantly until a shell found its magazine. All told, in the sea battles of 25th October, 19 war-

ships were sunk, mostly Japanese. SHROPSHIRE was plagued by kamikazes in November and again in January 1945 but events of 25th October finished Japanese sea power.

HMAS SHROPSHIRE'S long voyage from Chatham (U.K.) had a conclusion on 2nd September, 1945 in Tokyo Bay with 257 other allied warships including USS MISSOURI at the Surrender Ceremony.

Chapter 1

Anchored in Melbourne: Flinders Naval Depot (January – October 1942)

Envelope addressed to Mrs A. P. Yeomans, 61 Pine Street, Randwick, N.S.W. from Jim, 1942. (Jim Yeomans)

Mess 46 - CG1,
Flinders Naval Depot.
Same address
7th January, 1942

Dear Mum and Bub,

At the time of going to press I am expecting a letter from each of you in reply to my last one written last Tuesday. Since then I have had letters from both of you, but apparently my letter hadn't arrived at the time. The photo of me taken at Palm Beach arrived O.K. but I thought you weren't going to send it to me, Mum. I would like to correct what you said in your letter too - the girls I referred to were CANADIANS and not Yanks although it wouldn't worry me either way.

I suppose my wire reached you alright, so you know that my trip to Adelaide did eventuate. As I told you previously, I wrote to Jim Read on Saturday 27th and received a wire from him at tea time on Tuesday night to look him up at the John Bull Hotel. By a coincidence I had a letter from him on Tuesday night & he put as a P.S. "If you're ever in Adelaide you can get my whereabouts from the John Bull Hotel" –that letter was written before he got mine, so I think there's a bit of mental telepathy involved.

As per schedule I got my ticket by a judicious bit of bribing which saved me about 30/- even considering the half price to the forces on train fares. By spinning a yarn at the booking office I was able to get on the first division of the train and that saved me two hours. The second division leaves only 10 minutes later but gets in 2 hours behind. Lyn Waller and a couple of the boys going to Darwin were on the second division and I said good-bye to them on the station, and they flew from Adelaide the next night. The chap that I was staying with was supposed to fly as I mentioned in my last letter, but the plane was cancelled as late as 4.15 and he had to come on the same train as me, and do you think he was hostile! As you know, it was New Years Eve, but I didn't have so much as one drink. Naturally this couldn't be said for the other passengers, so it was pretty noisy and I didn't appreciate the music and frivolity that they thought the occasion called for.

The country between the two Southern cities is much drier than I expected although rabbits seemed to abound right at the side of the line. We only had to put on our watches half-an-hour on account of the Daylight Saving as we really should have put our clocks back half an hour through going a few hundred miles westward. So it didn't come with such a jerk to us, as we put our clocks on 1/2 hour travelling each way. One thing since I've been in the Navy, I've done more travelling in trains than in the rest of my life - I've done over 8000 miles by train not to mention 500 miles by plane. Its enough to put me off trains for life, and after the war, if I haven't got a car, the amount of travel by land I do will be negligible.

Got your letter at mid-day today, Mum –must have been slightly delayed. In regard to Cyril –I wouldn't really worry. In my opinion he should try to consolidate his present job and do what he can to advance while other men are being conscripted or joining the services. There is no need to mention this to Merle, although she really knows, that Cyril's eyesight is shocking and I honestly think that he wouldn't even be accepted for home - defence the condition they're in now. He's a bit touchy about it I think but he'll have to get attention for them soon.

I was talking to Frank Jolly, one of the lesser lights of Bronte Club, who is at present down here, on Monday. He said that he was home for the week-end and that Bronte & Bondi have barbed wire strewn over the beach as a defence precaution, so I suppose all the other beaches have been similarly treated. That will mean the wiping of all Surf Carnivals I suppose. I visited Glenelg & Henley beaches in Adelaide and notice that they also have barb wire entanglements along the beach, at intervals.

We arrived in Adelaide on Thursday the 1st, and a Mr. Fred Rodgers, a bouncy, jolly little man, the uncle of one of John Tunbridge's friends met us with his 1940 Dodge and his nephew and a couple of other friends. He drove the 3 of us - John & I, and another Supply Assistant "Gotchy" Anderson (W.A.) out to the Tunbridge house in Newstead. John's people were **very** nice and much too good for him. It may sound ungrateful but rather than be a hypocrite, he is a bit of a skite & is rather affected. As you know that's something I can't forgive. However, as he was my host I didn't let my feelings show. His family - Mother, father, sister and brothers 17 and 7 were directly opposite to him. He is the eldest, and they think the sun shines out of him. His

Grandmother lives next door, and has a Morris 8/40 and a Hillman and he uses whichever he pleases. There are several fruit trees in the back yard, & egged on by his parents & aided and abetted by his youngest brother, I made quite a mess of the plum and apricot trees. "Gotchy" & I were made to feel right at home & wore as little round the house as decency permitted. I had a look at the Cheer-Up hut you speak about, but it was too crowded to get a meal when Jim Read & I looked in, & probably the accommodation was over-taxed too.

As well as thanking Mrs Tunbridge, I wrote a letter of appreciation on Monday night to show I was fair dinkum.

After having lunch on Thursday, we met some of John's friends and went out to Glenelg for a swim. (For Bub's and possibly Mum's benefit I bet I got around more than you did) - Glenelg is THE beach equivalent to Bondi, and is 6 miles out of town. To get there, we passed through some truly rural surroundings - the tram made only 14 stops altogether and the stops are numbered & also have the name of the locality, so it is very handy for travellers. As you know I usually hate tram travelling, but we made the 6 miles in 18 minutes so that was pretty fair. All the trams go at a fair bat. The main thoroughfares leading into Adelaide, not so much the City Streets, are as straight as a die for several miles. Most of them are not in particularly good repair, but perhaps that is due to the troublous times.

It was a very hot afternoon, & I sweltered in a uniform & was very glad to go in for a swim, and christened the Speedo Merle gave me for Xmas. The water is flat, but cleaner than Melb. and the sand is also a trifle cleaner. At both Henley and Glenelg there are piers similar to the old Coogee one.

Although it was very hot still, I had to race away at 5.30 (d.s. time) in order to meet Jim Read as arranged by telephone that morning. I found Jim in the John Bull with 3 RAAF mates. They had been to the races at Morpettville (I passed the course on the way to Glenelg, it compares badly with Kensington) and they had done most of their cash. They usually stay at the John Bull & although they have only been over there 3 weeks, the Prop's wife, Mrs Thomas, will do anything for them now and she even offered them a loan to tide them over - they swear by her, & reckon they wouldn't stay anywhere else while on leave. As you know I don't drink very much myself, but I've had enough in Sydney & Melb. to allow me to judge & I think S.A. "West End" beer is the

best I've tasted. We had a couple in the bar until 6 o'clock (Adelaide hotels are very strict in regard to closing times & do no after hours sly-grog) as the lads were broke, we first tried the Cheer Up hut which was packed, then looked in at the R.R.R. at the station. Already they know all the girls there, & after eating a 2/6 meal told the girls the sad story about lack of finance, with the result that the girl said - "You didn't have soup or sweets, DID you?" "NO" they said, so she made the checks out for 1/4 each - nothing like personality. After that we had a look around town but didn't go to a dance or entertainment on a/c of finance. One thing the lads like as well as beer, is the fact that the trams are free to Active Service personnel (that doesn't include "Chocos").

I met John at 11.30 & he drove Gotchy & I & his girl friend out to a party where we tore chicken & settled some more beer. Notice they drink a lot of light wines over there as well as their beer. At about 1 a.m. we departed & I don't really remember hitting the pillow. I was sure tired. (I am now too!)

After young Colin, the kid brother woke me with an armful of fruit in the morning, I got up, had a shower & a shave & dropped my razor & broke the top of it, had breakfast & then settled down to a bit of serious fruit "woofing". However, John had a couple of RAAF pals who were returning to Mallala on the 10 a.m. train so we decided to go in with him & I could find Jim to say good-bye. As there was tons of fruit I took in a shoe box full for Jim & his cobbers as it would be a change for them. We looked like being late, as we missed a tram & would have had a fair wait, but flagged the first car that came along & got driven right in - Newstead would be about 4 miles out.

I found Jim & his pals after a fair amount of bother & handed over the fruit. I thought it was only a very small air field, but they tell me that there are 1,100 men there. It is still in course of construction & is not particularly pleasant - for a start the sewer is not yet laid on. However, Jim is pretty busy flying the Anson bombers (lucky hound) and doesn't notice it so much. I had a photo taken with him at the train door & to my disappointment it turned out rather badly. Merle is sending you the negative & I want you to take it to Kookaburra & tell Miss Newcombe that I'd like her to give it special attention, even if it means touching it up a bit - if she can make a good job of it, get a couple of postcards, otherwise 2 ordinary size prints.

After Jim's train departed, John who knows quite a few people, got us up

on to the roof of the railway building & I took a photo looking across the Torrens River & St. Peters Cathedral. This turned out very well & I want you to get a post card size of this one. Merle will also be sending a negative of John, Gotchy & I taken on Glenelg beach (we are standing in those respective positions if you wish to identify the other two) & its rather a good one of me. I'm stripped to the waist & look like a nigger. There is rather a glare coming from Gotchy's shirt & you might ask her if this could be reduced & get 2 post card size of this. Keep one for yourself & send me the other photos as soon as you get them.

After that John left us to our own devices, as he had to see a few people (very big business no doubt) so we toddled down to the Olympic Baths that we could see from the Station. They are very nice white tiled baths, not as elaborate as the Melb. ones, but have a lot of unique points. The water under the high board is 16 feet & that's very uncommon in tiled Baths. Also at the deep end, it is possible, if in good with the attendant to go down through a locked door to where glass has been let into the side of the Baths & it is very pretty to watch the people swimming as you can only see the underneath portion of the action, & when anyone dives in they bring a splurge of bubbles that make an ordinary dive look very sensational. I managed to get a couple of good underwater photos, which are unusual without being anything out of the box, & you will no doubt see them in due course. Wish I'd got someone to take me underwater as it gives a new aspect.

Being under the ground in a fairly confined space had made me feel even hotter than before, so I hired trunks & towel, & had a swim, which I rather enjoyed. By then, I was getting pally with all the local swimmers, having been a focus of interest with my uniform & camera. There was a lot of chlorine in the water which made us very thirsty, so as Gotch & I were on our way to Coles in Rundle St. to buy me a new razor, we were not displeased to accidentally note a sign "Red Lion" & just as we were going in the door from the south side, from the north side bounced Mr. Rodgers. We knew nobody, barely 6 or 7 people in Adelaide & had to bump him. He took a great part of the hospitality - you can hardly call the Adlde ones "pubs" and we had some refreshing "West End". He then advised Gotch how to go about making a call to W.A. & arranged to meet us at Coles after we had purchased my razor. He is the manager of a big firm there, & was up there to make the call, but we found it could be done in person at the G.P.O. for half price, so round we went. It was then that I sent

the telegram to Mum. Back to the Oriental Hotel one of the classiest & had lunch with Mr. R. I noticed in the window that a bottle of Hock was labelled 1/3 so I ordered a bottle for lunch, but they decided that we looked above that brand, & gave us a bottle costing 4/-. However, it didn't break me. Mr. Rodger paid for the nice lunch (dinner which must have cost 5/- a head. He gave me some very sound hints about ordering wines for meals that I have stored away for future use. We met John at 3 o'clock & had another extensive look around. By then my "dogs" were starting to bark as it was by no means as cool as the Adelaide travel posters suggest. We went on to the roof of the Shell Building overlooking Government House & I got another photo there.

We went to the Regent Theatre after tea, & I again saw "Reluctant Dragon" with "Saint at Palm Springs". However, its not a bad show & I didn't mind. Had a bit of a drive around afterwards. Next morning was still hot, & clad in short & singlets we drove in the open Morris up to Waterfall Gulley & Morialta, both pretty places which are only about 5 miles from Newstead. Hopped into town after that, & met Mr. Rogers again to say good-bye. I've got a standing invitation to visit him anytime - while in his office, he hung his Bowler hat on me in lieu of a hat stand & they were amazed to see how well it suited me. It looked my size & according to the mirror I looked the part, with Navy blue suit, white collar & black tie. Can't make up my mind whether I looked like a business-man or a punter. Think it would be the latter. I DID notice however, a marked resemblance to Percy. Left the lads at 12.30 & spent the afternoon at Henly with one of John's girl-friends. It was beautiful & went much too quickly. I had to sprint to get back to Newstead & then didn't arrive till 7! However, it was 8 o'clock when I left Henley. The trip back was lousy, as there was no air in my compartment. Brought the Smallcombe's quart of West End & a bottle of sparkling Cider. Spent the afternoon with them on the beach. Time's running short. Don't worry about the Japs now Bub, I think Australia is not in their plan & you needn't worry about evacuation. Haven't heard from Perce C. Working every day 7 a.m. till 10 p.m.

Love,
Jim

Mess 46 - CG1,
Flinders Naval Depot.
20th January, 1942

Dear Mum and Bubs,

Received Mum's letter yesterday, & as I suppose Merle will have told you most of my news, there isn't a great deal to write about. Managed to get out of Depot last Thursday & went up to Crib Point to replenish my own & friends' Weet Bix. As I needed exercise I took the opportunity to walk round to Stony Point where the ferry goes over to Cowes. Not a great deal to see, but it was a momentary mental release. The only catch is that I had to put on a collar & tie and coat in order to get out, but still it was worth it. If I could borrow the Chief's bike I'd do a few miles before tea a couple of times a week. I think he'll lend it to me when he's not using it himself so I'll put it on him when he comes back from week-end leave in Sydney on Tuesday night.

As you know by now, I had week-end leave with Merle & made a welter of it. Had a strenuous swim at the Olympic Pool on Saturday morning, & after having lunch in town got out to Flemington in time for the 2nd race. I went out with the express intention of backing "Busybody", but I saw that Purtell had been taken off & an apprentice was up & it was drawn wide so I went on to "Wags" on the place tote. "Busybody" won and "Wags" got 4th. I did that several times during the afternoon - went off the horse that won or was placed & backed a non-placed horse. Once I asked for place on 12 which ran nowhere, & was handed a ticket for 4. 4 ran 3rd, but I had handed the ticket back in exchange for 12. The only collect I had was on Purtell's "Chatasan" which ran 2nd & paid 15/-. I almost backed Unkovich's mount an unknown horse "Jack Again" in that race as well, but was a bit low so refreained. "Jack again" ran 3rd & paid £2.7.0. It was No. 13 & barrier 13! I did about a pound on the afternoon but that's not too bad. It was nice in the sun, I got in for nothing, & there were some good races. In one race 5 horses finished abreast, & in another 3 finished abreast. In that race, "Astounding" came from last at the turn to 3rd, not more than a head behind the winner.

I suppose you've heard about my performance with Champagne on Saturday night & I had a "wacky" head all Sunday. Sunday afternoon I went down

to St. Kilda "beach", and watched all the Yids, at least 10,000 of them, frolicking on the sand & shallow water.[1] A little area should be roped off for the Aussies to give them a fair go on the rest of the beach. The fashions as worn by the men are pretty dazzling, & put most of the women to shame.

I suppose Merle told you that I met Bill Jenkings & his wife on Saturday night. You'll probably remember that he was Publicity Officer for Bondi Surf Club & used to have an article in the Bondi Weekly every week. He remembered my name & articles only too well & we had quite a chat. He has been in Melbourne 5 weeks & doesn't like it at all... seems a very nice chap... funny I should know his name so long & meet him for the first time in Melbourne. Of course he knows my redoubtable Chief "Tug" Wilson. He says that Bassingwaite got sick of the Bondi Club & joined South Narrabeen - it's a wonder that he didn't join Tamarama or Bronte as he spends his time at one or the other. Only thing he'd have against Bronte, he can't stand Foster. Too much rivalry between them for the past 6 or 7 years.

I was pleasantly surprised yesterday to get a letter from Foster's girl (or ex-girl, I'm not sure which) Olive Smith. I never expected one from her & was lucky to get it - it was addressed to Mr. J. Yeomans, Flinders Naval Depot. Also got a letter from a girl I met in Adelaide, & she gave me an account of the little gossip & scandal it has.

Yesterday was a cow of a day, terribly windy and a lot of dust in the air. It rained a little bit as we were going up for lunch & shirts and caps were spotted with reddish mud specks - that's the second time that's happend in two weeks. About 4 o'clock (d.s. time) the unbearable humidity gave way to torrential rain & it rained steadily for 12 hours - the first solid rain in a month - terrific drought. Only hope that Sydney gets some too!

Haven't taken the pill you sent, but will keep it by me. The Xmas cake is not yet fully consumed, but I have a piece now & again when I feel inclined. Had a piece last night & it still seems O.K. Afraid I forgot Merle's birthday - thought it was next month. Hope you have kept my letter regarding the films

[1]This description is a bit of hyperbole, but it illustrates the large Jewish community present in St. Kilda at that time. The Australian Jewish community was transformed in the 1930s and 1940s by the arrival of approximately 8,000 Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia and post-war, approximately 35,000 East European survivors of the Holocaust.

- get the negs. printed to my instructions & forward them as soon as possible. Find Bub's torch a Godsend after getting in late Sunday night, & also after leaving work late at night. Had a letter from Max Faigen last week - he says that he has had letters from Syd Worrall who is with "Baldy" Nixon at Beirut, Syria, George McGrath at Port Moresby, & Frank Boulton, Jack Rhodes & Tom Gittoes at Kuala Lumpur - they'd be into it now. Syd, Frank & Jack were up at our place playing poker, if you remember.

Till next time,
Jim

Mess 46 - CG1,
Flinders Naval Depot.
Same address
27th January, 1942

Dear Mum,

Received your letter yesterday afternoon - as it was Anniversary Day, I presume it was a Public holiday everywhere, but down here it passed un-noticed except for the fact that there was only one delivery of mail. Up to the present the photos haven't arrived, but may turn up in tonight's mail. I got the parcel O.K. on Friday, & have the raisins in my desk so I can dip into them every time I feel hungry which is pretty often. Bubs put in some pine-apple of her own accord & I have a job restraining myself from eating it all at once. The only thing I have against the raisins is the fact that the seeds are still in them & as I can't go spitting seeds into the W.P.B. every now & again without causing notice it is a bit awkward - still I enjoy them very much. The cake isn't finished yet, but probably will be before the end of the week. The papers sent by Bubs arrived on Wed. or Thursday & I'm pleased she included the Stock Exchange magazine, which indirectly gave me an idea which you will hear of later. I sent negatives of two more photos to Bubs in her letter, but you do not make it clear if you are having them printed yet. Naturally if you haven't sent them by the time you get this letter, don't send them as I'll pick them up.

In Bub's letter I mentioned that I hadn't heard directly from Pinto, but through official channels saw that he had been on board Canberra, probably to do a repair job - he was only on two days. I also noticed that with him was a R.A.A.F. Corporal named Daryl Eckford - the name is familiar but I can't place it. In a dim way I either connect it with the Curveys or St. Mathew's Church, Bondi - I'm not too clear about it, but I do know that I've often heard the name mentioned.

As I told you in my last letter, as soon as the Chief "Tug" came back from leave, I put it on him for the loan of his bike & he lent it quite willingly. It's a fairly new bike, & although not in the same class as my old one, it felt pretty good to me once I got out of the Depot & pedalled blithely along the country roads. To get out it was necessary to have coat & collar & tie on, & this is a

bit tough for cycling, but I made the best of it. I got out of Depot at about 4 o'clock & rode to Hastings, which as you may remember, is about 7 miles towards Melbourne. I stopped there, & watched the wharf fishermen & stocked up on chocolate & chewing gum. To my surprise, horror & disgust, I found that P.K.'s are now 1½d & chocolates have gone up - that'll annoy Pinto who is a great gum chewer. I also bought other groceries for the boys on the way back and got in with a fair load. However it was a pleasant diversion, & the exercise wouldn't do any harm. I'm keeping more fit these days & apart from the way boredom affects me, I'm fairly O.K. I'm in good with the Supply Assistant in the Milk Store & I slip round to see him before starting work each morning & get a glass of beautiful creamy milk from the top of a can - its better than the milk in town, & bears no comparison with the watered milk which we get so sparingly in the Mess. I think taken regularly, it should help make up for the lack of value in the other food we get.

I manage to get down to the Baths fairly frequently now, & although I don't feel as if I'm swimming easily or well, I should think the exercise should help keep me in nick - its the only strenuous physical exercise I can get at present. Being a Writer has plenty of drawbacks I've found - afraid clerking won't suit me after the strife is over. Got a bit of a shock the other day which I was going through an official paper from the Royal Navy & saw the Polish Cross of Valour (Kryzch Walezsnych) had been awarded to James Yeomans R.N. for bravery in connection with the Polish forces. He is a Petty Officer Telegraphist. Quite strange to see my own name like that - only wish I had the chance to do something out of the box like that - odds seem to be against it.

Went to the pictures here on Friday night & saw "Footsteps in the Dark" that you saw at Bronte many months ago - fair show & helped to put the time in. Very close to backing High Caste on Saturday & was very annoyed when I heard his win after a magnificent run from last. I was duty Saturday night & again Sunday afternoon. Saturday night was very trying & thousands of insects were buzzing around the office lights & caused me no little annoyance. I tried to slaughter them, but didn't seem to make any impression, although the floor of the office because almost covered with the bodies of moths, beetles & other insects. Rained early Sunday morning & relieved things somewhat.

Just before tea yesterday afternoon, a few of us including a couple of fancied themselves as athletes, got to talking about fitness & stamina etc. I talked

the two biggest shots into doing the "dive-bomber test" & they both went out like lights. The second one was out for a full ten seconds & when he came round didn't know where he was for a few seconds - he looked round dazedly & said "Where have I been?" He said he felt as though he'd been asleep for hours. It's funny to see them go down like pole-axed bulls.

I was on Commander's request this afternoon for leave. I thought I'd have nothing to lose by asking for 4 days leave from Friday to Tuesday night. Chief "Tug" had no objection & signed my chit as did my divisional officer who is a Warrant Writer. I hadn't put any reason for wanting the leave, but the Commander asked me why I wanted 4 days, so I told him I needed a business day in Sydney to see my Broker about disposing or otherwise of my New Guinea Gold shares, which I hold jointly with my Mother. He asked if I could produce evidence, & of course I said yes, although I was racking my brains. He said "Leave granted subject to evidence being produced". I went out in a bit of a whirl, but calmed down & searched for the letter complete with Registered envelope which I got from Wharton some time ago. I took this to the Warrant Master at Arms, told him a suitable story & asked him if that would be considered sufficient evidence. He didn't remember the details of my case & said he'd fix it up after a bit of humming and haring, as I suppose he couldn't be bothered going into minute details. So it looks as if I'll be right for a decent "week-end" leave & won't have to travel back till Monday night when the train shouldn't be very crowded. I had visions of ringing you tonight & getting you to send a letter as "evidence". If all goes well I should see you on Saturday morning & be home for two whole nights, so I think that's worth while going up for & is much better than rushing back on Sunday night - at anyrate in my own opinion I need a spell from this penitentiary.

Had a letter from Merle today about going to Geelong, but if I only had the normal week-end leave I'd have to leave there Saturday night as there is no train Sunday - it would be too quiet to suit me - I want to have a change when I'm on leave - it's quiet enough up here for a monk or a hermit or something. Now I've got 4 days leave there's no question about it - I dread the train trip TO Sydney, but I'll manage to survive it, & will I give that surf a thrashing - hope it rains before I get there - I'd hate the drought to break over the week-end. May not have time to write Bub a separate letter, so read her this one. I've only got one stamp & one envelope at the present moment too.

See you Saturday Mom - till then, love from your rascally son,
Jim

P.S. By the way - my watch has gone “cuckoo” & I’ll have to leave it with Mrs Whitehead - so dig up the old one so I can wear it back with me.

C/o Writers' Recreation Room,
Flinders Naval Depot.
4th February, 1942

Dear Mum,

Very glad to find you home when I rang last night as it is reassuring to be able to talk to you even just to exchange gossip. I hope that by the time you receive this, you will be feeling better and your neck will be O.K.

I had quite an orgy of mail when I went up to the dorm. last night - there were letters from Bub, Max Faigen (of the Club), Col Ayres (of N.S.T.) writing from Orange - the last letter from him was the Grafton club, and the one before that from Cowra. He doesn't like the change from Grafton to Orange. Also a letter from Dawn Hudson one of the local girls, and the papers from you. I just had time to skim through the letters when the lights went out, so I had a shower in the dark and shaved in the dark this morning. I forgot to tell you last night that it has been extremely hot this week and today is just the same - it's not so bad through the day but being in a crowded dorm. at night is not the best and lately I seem to wake up with a very fuzzy head. As I told you we are shifting back to BM 2 at midday, and although it is a nuisance, it will be better than being on the ground level where the air is stagnant and dusty.

Your last letter was a puzzle on its own, and I had great excitement in following the consecutive numbers. Hope Perce Curvey is O.K., I don't even know where he was supposed to be. And Garth has gone to live with his in-laws - I bar that. Looked up SHonk's card & see that he is an Ordinance Artificer, P.O. rank, and is permanent Navy.[2] Would like to see Bett's boy, he must be a rare turn - can't imagine Bett with anything like him. Hope the Kays make out alright, as you said they certainly treated us well and were fair in everything - I suppose you'll still see a lot of Paula.

As I said, I played cricket for Ship's Company against New Entries last week on Wednesday and Thursday afternoon and as I haven't bowled for months it made me terribly still, and Thursday, Friday and even a bit on Saturday, I felt just the same as if I'd been riding a horse - my thighs were terribly tied up and

[2] P.O.: Petty Officer, a non-commissioned naval rank.

my ribs and stomach muscles felt as if they'd been kicked. We had pretty good opposition - one of them named "Leak"' played for S.A. against Vic. last season & scored a century. Just before I went out to play on Thursday I heard someone ask for me at the door and found Arch. Patterson's youngest son Dick there still in civvies - he had come down the night before & hadn't yet been kitted up - as you know Arch. is the Sec. of the Surf Club. My mind was a bit relieved as 4 Writers were sent to Darwin on Friday so I should be safe from that for a while. I think they'll be saving me for the "Canberra", & as there is no relief need till July, I've got a few months here ahead of me still. I believe I'm to be shifted out of this Office into Ledger Office next week, so as to give me more experience. Ledgers won't be so hot after this easy-going job under "Tug", but I'll have to know a bit about them if I am ever going to get my Leading rate.

I was pretty lucky to get 3½ days in Melbourne last weekend although I was tempted to come home as I'm beginning to get sick of Melbourne. I bought a new camera - similar to the street photographers at Herbert Smalls and traded-in my old one for 30/-. This camera takes 36 films of 35 m.m. and the actual size is 1½" X 1" - however the advantage is that they enlarge very clearly. It has a lot more gadgets than the old one, being able to take photos with much less light and also fast moving objects like race horses etc. The old one had only one speed of 1/33 second, but I get get 1/25, 1/50, 1/75, 1/100 and 1/200 on this one which is a great advantage. I wrote to Kookaburra yesterday to get their prices for this kind of film - Cyril was very interested in it, & solemnly looked it over from every conceivable angle - he doesn't like the idea of taking 36 photos before seeing the first one.

As I had to wait about 40 minutes for my "Regent" usherette to knock off on Friday night, she installed me in the best seats and I saw the end of "Tom, Dick and Harry" - I'm glad I didn't have to pay! It seemed to be a stupid sort of a show.

To fill a long-standing curiosity I called in at the St. Kilda Squash Courts on Saturday morning to enquire about the prices etc. and finished up playing for an hour with the Professional. I had a good idea of the rules as we used to play handball in a Squash court at North Head Barracks. It is a very strenous game & I was sweating copiously for a good while after we finished - should be good for keeping in condition. Will take one of the lads with me next time. Played Cyril on Sunday morning, & although sweat was pouring off him, I had hardly

started to raise a sweat. His eye is very bad and he was making wild swipes and going nowhere near the ball - it would benefit him if he could improve a bit. It is fairly dear, as it costs 2/- each per half hour. To ordinary standard players ½ hour is quite enough.

As you've heard I went out to Flemington and didn't have a collect. Of course "Kelos" in the Newmarket and "Regency" in the Sires Produce were rank outsiders, and I still don't know how they beat the class horses running. I pinned my faith to Great Britain in the Sires Produce as he was a good price, compared to Hesione, Riverton, Chatfield and Blue Valley, but he didn't show up. However, it was a nice day out there and I'm glad I was there.

Saturday night was too warm for dancing and I went to the Majestic and saw "Icescapades". Although the skating was very good, the story was a bit disjointed and it was "just a show".

Sunday afternoon & Monday morning I was at St. Kilda beach and the sun was nice, but it is very uninteresting swimming in flat water after gingerly walking through miles of shallow water which is littered with shells and broken glass. Melbourne is full of Yanks and I asked one of them, a Sergeant, how many were coming out here. He said "Fella, before we're through, Orstralians will jest look like tourists round here". I believe the quota is 2,000,000 soldiers and airmen, so pretty soon an Aussie serviceman will be a rare sight under the flood of Yanks. The trouble will be getting rid of them after the War. Hope I get a ship soon, because they're a moral to visit the States soon.

As my watch winder went bung again, I sent it by registered mail to N.S.T. yesterday and hope they can get it fixed up no charge. Seems hard to believe I've been in the Navy a year tomorrow, & haven't done a thing yet - most exasperating to me, and I'm not the most patient of beings. See about getting a lottery ticket and call it "The First Twelve" or something like that, and let me know the Number. From Bub's letters, she seems to be taking this War too seriously and I wish you'd persuade her to read some light novels, even Murders would be better than the worby Politico books she's been feeding on. Perhaps she'll be better after a spell in the country. She's definitely too morbid at present - tell her to let <u>us</u> worry about the War!

Merle seems to be cheerful enough, considering who it is but you know

how Merle is, she doesn't feel well unless she can complain about something. At present they're taking things pretty quietly and Cyril puts up with a lot more than the average human would, and Merle appreciates it, whenever she things of it.

Well, Mother that seems to be the issue, so until next time, look after yourself and keep cheerful. I'll see if I can manage to get home next month.

Your loving son,
Jim

P.S. John Tunbridge was discharged from the Navy last week - don't know what he plans to do now.

Writers' Recreation Room,
Flinders Naval Depot.
5th February, 1942

Dear Mum and Bubs,

As you might guess, there isn't much news, but I thought I'd best write now so that you can get this before the week-end. After my few days away, my work is in a mess & as well there is the monthly return to be done, so I'll have to make this brief.

The train trip down wasn't as comfortable as it might have been as there were 8 in my compartment & I seemed to spend the whole night trying to relieve my poor, cramped body. We got into Albury at 6.30 & I had time to have breakfast before going on to Melbourne. Luckily I was in one of the new air-conditioned carriages which are fairly comfortable & managed to doze a few times.

As soon as we got in, I went down to the Olympic Pool & had a swim to refresh myself, had lunch & then went out to pick up my washing from Mrs. Hill & then changed my clothes & had a shave at Merle's place. Merle of course isn't home yet. By the way I saw a new & very classy way of spelling Merle - "Myrl" - how do you like that. Melbourne is full of Yankee gobs & soldiers who have come out to win the War for us. I might be prejudiced but they all seem to look terribly "soft" in contrast with the Australian forces - even Aussie city men look tough but the Yanks all look like typical townies.

Back to the Depot on the 5 o'clock train, & found a couple of letters, the photos from "Kookaburra", & the papers Bubs sent. I've been so busy so far that I haven't had much chance to look through them. The first batch of photos don't look so hot, but the later two small ones I had done enlarged very clearly.

I tackled the prunes out of the bottle for tea last night but they weren't particularly nice, owing to several having burst & the almond flavour & smell from the seeds had permeated all the others. I also found a parcel from Randwick Comforts fund containing a tin of Joyces biscuits & a stick of shaving

cream - On my shaving stocks at present I think I'll have no trouble in keeping clean-shaven for the duration. One of the letters I got was from work & it seems to me that the remainder of the staff that I knew has handed in their resignation, & according to a letter from Col Ayres, Mr. Pearson has been called up for compulsory Medical Examination - even if he doesn't get exemption I don't think he'll go in, as his health has not been near perfect. Soon there'll be nobody at all at N.S.T. that I know.

I've got an idea that some of my letters have been going astray, & that might account for not having heard from Pinto. Col Ayres is in camp at Grafton now, & he said he has written to me twice since leaving Cowra, but I haven't got either letter. So address my letters as above from now on, as it appears that there has been too much confusion regarding the changing of Messes.

I'm glad today is pay-day, as I arrived back here with just 1d to my name. A funny incident occurred yesterday - a Writer from another department rushed into our office & without thinking said to the Engineer Commander "The Chief Writer wants to see you, sir!" I thought old Berry-Smith was going to burst - & he certainly gave the boy a word lacing & wanted to know how long a Commander had been at the beck & call of a Chief Writer - as soon as he went out, to take a phone call on the other Chief Writer's phone, our office just roared. None of us would have said that to him on a bet.

Well Bub, I hope you still don't mind this duplicated letter, because if you did, I'm afraid you did out a few times when I have to rush to get one away at all. I'm enclosing another couple of cards with planes on for the kids if they happen to want them. Don't forget my papers next week will you.

Till next time, cheerio and love,
Jim

P.S. By the way, my watch isn't too clever still & I may still have to pop it in somewhere to have a repair done to it - I'll let you know how its going in the next letter. Don't think its worth sending all the way back to Mr. Whitehead.

Writers' Recreation Room,
Flinders Naval Depot.
11th February, 1942

Dear Mother,

I received your newsy letter last night, and you will be pleased to note that the registered packet arrived O.K. and I collected my watch yesterday morning. It's a funny thing you mention seeing Jack Hill on the bike, its a worthwhile sight, & incidentally, his nickname is "Porky". Note also that you met Jean MacMurray - couldn't think who you meant when you were leading up to it. She & Bruce that I used to play tennis with are members of a family of 11 children - just a cricket team. As you say, she's an agreeable type of girl, but you always seem to find that from members of a large family.

Glad the phone call was quite clear on Friday night - it's a great consolation to know I can always speak to you at any time - makes you only as far away as the nearest telephone. The time seemed terribly short to me, & I'd be terribly surprised if we got the full 3 minutes. Actually on looking at the calendar I find that it is exactly a week since I started work after coming back, but being down here all the time makes it seem much longer & I'll be glad to get leave this week-end.

At last Pinto turned up with a letter on Monday & was very apologetic for not writing sooner. He says t hat it is just lately he has begun to know what work is - notice that the top of his letter is header Corporal W. Bain - must have got promotion at New Year. Says that he tried to ring you unsuccessfully, & hadn't a chance to call to thank you for the socks. The Bains live at Ashbury now, & when we gets home (which he says is now more infrequent) he catches a Campsie bus. He confirmed what I told you about he & Ron Farmilo going to Brisbane to do a job on the Canberra's aircraft, & said that the skipper wanted one of them to stay & a toss of the coin decided on the other chap. He quite expected to find me on board. He says now that he is waiting for the "Hobart" to come in, as he has a draft to her & wants me to try for a draft also. I'm afraid its a lot easier said than done, & I'm beginning to give up hope of ever going to sea. Pinto says that he might be in Melbourne this week-end & to ring the Marshall's to see if he is out there on Saturday... it'd be fun to have him down.

As per the cutting you sent, I see that Jack Campbell is going to win the Aust. Junior Championship in Melb. & I may go out to see him do it if I get the chance on Saturday. If I can only get some bets on him I should make a pile as he's unbeatable.

Also notice from the paper that Mr. Funnell of the Railways has been made Chief Director of some form of Passive Defence for the whole of Aust. You might have also noticed it. Speaking about the Railways, it's a good job that I didn't go to Bubs for tea on Monday night last week, or that Bubs didn't get on my train as she jokingly said, because we went through Strathfield at a modest 50 m.p.h. & didn't stop till Moss Vale.

In direct contrast to what you say the weather in Sydney was like, it was very dull & overcast down here over the week-end, & didn't give me a chance to swim, or wash my blanket as I intended. The picture on here Saturday night was the "Ghost Train", so I stayed in the dorm. & got embroiled in a savage game of "Monopoly". This was the first of the series I played over the week-end, & after dealing in hundreds of £s in the game, we parted over 1/- each to the winner. I only managed to run 2nd twice - However its a long absorbing game & I didn't mind spending my time or money that way.

Woke up Monday morning with a sniffly nose, that developed rapidly into a fully fledged cold & continued in full force yesterday during which time I used about 10 hankies. Luckily I have plenty. This morning I find that my cold has entirely disappeared & I feel a new man. I ought to considering the treatment I gave it. I used the nasal rub I had, used up all my eucalyptus, ate all the prunes & preserved fruit, took some of your brown pill stuff, & used up all the aspirins that I got in a Comforts fund parcel last year. I think what really broke it was the fact that I borrowed a new bottle of strong eucalyptus off one of the boys yesterday afternoon & took about 8 drops on a dessert spoon full of sugar. It almost suffocated me at the time it was so drastic, but must have been effective.

Seem to be quite a few colds going round - may be the weather. Yesterday morning when we woke, it was dark as midnight & was raining & windy - just one of those mornings you instinctively stay put in bed, & just <u>listen</u> to the weather. The boys took quite a lot of persuading to get them out.

I was pretty low in cash yesterday as I only had 2/-, but I did some very

astute buying. I borrowed 6d from my esteemed Chief & from the "Pusser" store, I bought a new black silk tie for 1/10 & a stiff "Addis" tooth brush for 6d. At lunch time there was a sale of kit of deserters & dead men. The stuff usually goes dirt cheap & I first bought a used pair of shorts, a dirty towel & 2 dirty pairs of underpants for 1/- (it comes off the next pay) I just backed out so I could throw the u/pants in a bin & when I came back I heard a chap saying that he'd wanted to buy a towel, so I sold him my dirty one for 6d - that brought the cost of the shorts that I'd wanted to 6d. Later on I bought a pair of brand new white shorts, a brand new shirt (my size - & two dirty shirts for 2/- I sold the dirty shirts later for 1/-, so to finish up I had a new shirt, a new pair & a used pair of shorts for a modest 1/6 - how's that, & in addition I had 1/- ready cash after paying the Chief back. White shorts are always handy, & when I go to the tropics as I undoubtedly will some day, I'll find 4 pairs of shorts very handy. Merle will probably go crook on me for not bringing the dirty shirts down for Cyril - they were quite good - but a chook turned over suited me, & meant that I didn't have to have someone else's dirties among mine. I was quite pleased with my buying at anyrate, seeing as the stuff I bought for 1/6 would cost at least a pound in the shops.

I was talking to Jack Tunbridge, the S.A. I stayed with in Adelaide last night, & he told me that he was surveyed by the medical board yesterday & they have recommended that he be discharged "P.U.N.S." (physically unfit for Naval service) on account of the unreliability of his stomach, consequent on the accident he had about 18 months ago, before he came in the Navy. He was badly hurt at the time, & there is a terrific operation gash. Naturally he's not very happy at the prospect of going "outside."

Had a letter from Jim Read on Friday night & he told me about going home & gave me some news which he thought would be new to me - I was able to reply & bring his news completely up to date.

Yesterday afternoon a selected group of writers, including myself were given instruction in handling the BREN machine gun, & its a lovely little weapon, & compared to previous machine guns, simplicity itself to pull to pieces, & there is so little that can go wrong with it in action that anyone is competent to handle it efficiently after brief instruction. If I ever get the opportunity, I know I wont be frightened to use it - its quite light as it weighs only 23 lbs., has a rapid rate of fire, over 600 per minute, & with a few special gadgets it has, only kicks

as much as an ordinary service rifle. What struck me was the simplicity of every working part & the ease with which barrels can be changed when they get red hot, or the whole gun can be assembled.

On Sunday I bumped into a chap named George Dowd, who used to always have tea with me before we went to Tech. when I was working at B & B. He is also a cobber of Frank Nortons & lives in Waverley. He is very green as he's only been in 2 weeks & hasn't yet been on leave in Melbourne. He's in a different watch to me, but he's trying to get it changed so that I can show him round Melb. He joined as an Ordinary Seaman, & in some ways I rather envy the fact that he'll still probably beat me to sea. Its just a year on Friday since I went up for Medical Examination - can't make up my mind whether it only seems like last month or a lifetime ago.

Well Mum, thanks again for sending my watch so promptly & I may have to hang on to it, if its going to cost too much to have the other one repaired. As I think I told you before the photos turned up, the last two were very good & enlarged very well. I'll show them to Merle & probably send them home in a future letter.

Cheerio for the present, & in future don't worry if I give you a ring, it will probably only be to pass the time of the day.

Love...
Jim

Writers' Recreation Room,
Flinders Naval Depot.
17th February, 1942

Dear Mum,

Received your letter last night, and read it in spasms between spare moments in a game of "Monopoly". As it was not possible to concentrate on both, I had to read it again before I went to "bed", & against this morning. As it happened I played two games of "Monopoly" although I had intended going to the office, and I won both games, so augmented my cash account by a couple of bob. Its quite a good game provided you don't get sick of it by playing it too much.

I'd better go back to last week to start my news. I don't think I told you that on Wednesday afternoon, a few Writers were given the course from "GO" to "WHOA". It's a nice little weapon, (I forgot to mention that we did the course on the BREN gun) and with this new stage of the war I wouldn't mind taking one into my hammock every night. On Thursday afternoon I was out digging slit trenches and enjoyed the change except for the fact that my hands developed a nice set of blisters.

The arrangements for the leave trains on Friday night went a bit screwy & I didn't get into town till comparatively late, but some missed out altogether & didn't come in till the following morning.

Went to the best St. Kilda Coffee lounge Friday night - "Ye Olde Galleon" - and in the tram going out there was plenty of interesting happenings. There were a couple of "kippers" (pommies), who were young Engineer officers off a merchant ship. These two had very big mouths & it wasn't long before they were in arguments with our sailors. The Yanks in the tram kept right out of it. After some "compliments" had been exchanged one of them called a young civvie a "gaol breaker" & a "murderer" as respecting his alleged ancestors & then it was on. The conductor had already asked them to get off, so I thought it must be the conductor who was in the strife. However it turned out to be the civvie, later joined by a soldier. This was going on while the tram was speeding along & I thought one of them would fall out. The one with the MOST

talk was screaming out "My pal will kill him, Gordon will kill him" & next minute Gordon was flat on his back & he was on the receiving end of a soldier as a result of trying to butt in on the other fight. The driver stopped the tram so he could have a look, fists and heads were going through the tram windows, women were screaming for the police & everyone enjoyed themselves very much. You needn't worry about me having been in on it, as unfortunately there was no one left for me to take on. It's easy to bait the Kippers & Aussies are becoming rather skillful at it & as soon as a certain pitch is reached, they gleefully & barbarously proceed to beat them up - talk about the Yanks talking too much - they aren't a patch on the Poms.

After this little fun & games I proceeded to the aforementioned Coffee lounge & put in a couple of enjoyable hours there. Don Baker of Station 3DB was the compere, there was a full orchestra, and several good vocalists who are permanently attached to this Coffee lounge. They put on a slick, quick performance with no pauses, & it was as good as going to the Tivoli - they make quite a business out of the entertainment side now.

I forgot to tell you earlier that my Chief left for his ship on Friday & on Thursday invited me up to the Chief's Club for his send-off. I wouldn't have gone up, only I was down at the office with "Tug" & he got me to go up with him, so I didn't feel such a goof creeping in among all the Chiefs & trying to find where Smithy was, but "Tug" soon found him & we had quite a merry evening. I was the only low rating there & soon found my self in the company of several Chiefs, several Warrant Officers, & even the Captain's Secretary who is a bit of a tyrant & looked on by the boys as a bit of a deity. They got me to play the piano & one of the Warrant Officers asked me if I'd come down to play for them one night this week - I agreed to - and will go down as soon as I'm told the night - that is if they don't think better of it. If I get an "in" to the W.O.'s like this I should soon become pally with a few who may be able to do something for me. Smithy told me that he had seen the Drafting Officer that day, & he had promised to send me to the "C" as soon as a relief was needed for any reason. I want to go to the "HOBART" now that Pinto is going there, but I won't quibble if the other one comes first.

To continue with the week-end - I rang the Marshalls on Saturday morning, & found that Pinto had wired them that he was coming down so I told them that I would meet his train. I left my watch at a jewellers in the City, & they put

on a new winder, but it still continues to lose, so I am wearing the old watch still. I went down to meet the 11.5 train which got in at 11.30 & he wasn't on that - On the off chance I met the "Spirit" at 12 & couldn't see him. So I rang the Marshalls & reported, then went away & had lunch & went back to Spencer Street to meet the 3rd division which got in at 1.40 & couldn't see him on that so rang Mrs. Marshall again & reported. I hadn't made any fixed plans as I wanted to find out Pinto's ideas first, however I saw that Jack Campbell was swimming in the Australian Junior C'ship at the Brunswick Baths so I went out there to see him win, which he did. He didn't do record time, but it was fresh water which makes for slower time, & even if he had broken the record, he couldn't have kept it as the race wasn't started by a gun. I met his father out there, & also Pat Norton who is now married & living in Melbourne. She hasn't raced since she married. I waited for the Women's Junior C'ship & saw Judy Joy Davies the Vic. champion just beat her clubmate by a touch, & there was a bit of an uproar when the judge gave the second girls time as being 4/5 second slower than hers. They made another mix-up by placing the S.A. girl 3rd instead of the N.S.W. girl who gained third place quite easily - there was a great turmoil over this, & I believe that it was later fixed up. The divers were good, especially the Clowns whose turns included diving 25 ft locked together right into the water, & also riding a bicycle off the top tower.

I again rang Mrs. Marshall after leaving the baths & spoke to none other than little Will. It appears that he was on the 1.40 train & I missed him. Unfortunately No.1 platform at Spencer St. has a lot of exits, & besides that he was wearing shorts & I had my mind set on a person in blues or summer drabs. So I pushed out to Balwyn as quickly as the trams would allow me, & found Marshall's place with very little trouble. I found Pinto hanging out of Harry Marshall's truck, trying to fix some obstinate part. We had tea there, and although I ate at least twice as much as I do at home to keep with Pinto, he went for about 20 minutes after I stopped. He explained to me afterwards that if he didn't eat like that they'd think he was ill, because they had a fixed idea that he was a Champion eater. As I couldn't go to St. Kilda I used Pinto's razor to make myself presentable. He was to meet an Air Force friend of his who was going to the HOBART with Bill, so I rang "Rusty" earlier in the afternoon & she managed to get girls for Bill & "Bluey" who turned out to be quite a nice chap & who is a good hand on a trumpet, so Pinto is anxious to get us together on the Hobart - a very ambitious scheme.

We met the girls in town & for want of a better suggestion went out to St. Kilda Palais. Pinto hasn't been there for about 18 months, and finds Melbourne a bit strange in the "brown-out". The whole party got on very well, I knew the other two girls previously, and as we managed to get a table to use as our base we managed to have a yarn in between dances. I was a trifle taken aback, to find BETH grinning at me, but finding that she & her partner were along, I invited them over, and they were a welcome addition. The Palais was very crowded, but we had an anjoyable night. Pinto had to go back to Balwyn & I learnt the next day that he managed to get in by 2.30, which wasn't too bad considering the distance he had to travel at that late hour. I believe Cyril got up at 4 a.m. & was quite amazed to find me in bed already.

The weather wasn't particularly inviting for swimming in the dirty Melbourne water, so I just went for a fairly long walk with Merle & Cyril in the morning, & went down to the Powerhouse in the afternoon. Listened to the "Hit Parade" on the radio, then the Lux play, played a couple of hands of poker-rummy, & just managed to catch the train that got us into the Depot in no happy frame of mind at about 12.30.

Cyril seems to resemble Sid Kay, as he is very enthusiastic about becoming a family man. Hope Merle manages alright - perhaps it will make her more patient in the distant future. I've been told what my present is to be already (a "bunny" rug) & once again I'm to be "pooled in" as God-father. I'll have to make a list or I'll forget them all - forget whether that makes 15 or 16 I'm god-father to - I won't be able to afford any of my own.

Glad to note from your letter that it was raining in Sydney when you wrote, and trust you got a substantial issue. We have had a fair amount of rain lately, including a violent thunder storm on Thursday night. I made a mistake about the name of the Waverly lad in my last letter - it should have been George O'Dowd.

I'm duty today, all day, so I'm typing this in my spare time. It's very hot now, but we have to wear out ordinary uniform & not "negative jumpers" as we have been wearing for the past month or so, as the rig is piped first thing in the morning & not changed. When we get up in the morning it is pitch dark & quite cold, so I can see that if we don't get Negatives on a day like this, it means that we are back in winter rig to stay for about another 10 months.

The War situation at present isn't the best, & I don't know any more about it than you do. All we can do is wait and see, and t hat's what I've been doing for the past year. I'm a bit sick of the waiting part, but unfortunately there's nothing I can do about it. Now that Winter is coming I hope I can get out of here, but I'm a bit particular as to where I go as I definitely don't want another shore station. I think about a dozen new Writers came in to do a New Entry course last week, & if they are to become Ships Company, it means that several of us will be sent out, as there wouldn't be sufficient room. Unfortunately, those sent out may only go to local Depots where Writers are forgotten and never go to sea- if that were the case, I might as well have taken the chance I was offered of becoming a Paymaster Sub - Liuet. Still that's still all in the future, & I suppose everything will work out, & if not to my satisfaction, I'll probably have something further to say about it.

Cheerio for the present Mother, and don't worry about anything. Remember the saying - "Don't worry - it may never happen".

Much love,
Jim

P.S. What's the strength of Rita taking my books, I've got my eye on those French books & may neeed them some time this year. Tell her politely but firmly that I want them back - keep your eye on my Accounts books.

P.P.S. Heard from Jim Read that the Club boys got safely away from Malaya.

Writers' Recreation Room,
Flinders Naval Depot.
23rd February, 1942

Dear Mum,

As usual its after supper & I'm down at the Office to do a spot of work & also to get my letter to you away punctually. Chief "Tug" is duty Cypher tonight & was in here until a moment ago. He's a tiger on drinking water and just snatched at the glass reposing on the neck of the water bottle and broke it – that's the fifth he's broken in less than 3 months, & he let me roar him up & took it quite humbly – then he said "I give up" & went away to work at the Cyphers all night. If I don't take lively action we won't have a glass to drink our creamy milk from in the morning. Usually he sends one of us over to the store with an unofficial chit reading "1 only glass – Drafting Office (E) for the use of – OR ELSE...sgd. "Tug". We always get it.

As you can see, there's not much to put in my letters after a week down here. I got your letter today and read it at tea time, in between pieces of a strawberry jam sandwich – as you may guess, you provided the jam & not the Navy. Too bad you've been running around after Aunt Ida – wonder what someone would say if you said "No" when they send an S.O.S. for you? You haven't said any more about Mrs. Callanan's school marm taking the flat – is it off or still in abeyance? I expect you'll find it abit lonely with the Kays out of the house, but if I guess right, you'll probably see just as much of Paula as ever. She'll be the one that will be looking for company. Hope you don't get lonely, but there's a big difference between being lonely & being alone – I think I've more chance of being lonely with a dorm. full of 30 odd men than you have on your own. Not that I'm actually lonely, but we're all going a little bit "tropical" – we're discontented as we seem to have gone stagnant down here and are beginning to feel like the forgotten men. There is plenty of work but there is too much routing, and I feel in need of a change. There was a lot of talk about 6 Writers going to Darwin, in which case I would be a moral I think, but since the Bombing nothing more has been heard of the notion – I'm by no means scared of the thought of going there, its just that I want to have my excitement at sea.

I had a letter from Jim Read the other day, & he has started his "wings test"

& should be a fully fledged pilot in a week or two. Isn't it amazing,- only 6 months ago, he was just another no-hoper on the club steps, and now he is in a different world to me – its enough to make me weep. If I couldn't do anything Jim Read can do, I'd be very much surprised. Also got a letter from Olive Smith, who tells me that Eileen MacInerney, one of the old beach gang was married on Saturday to Laurie Latona who used to go to Cleve with me. I never had any time for him, but I think Mac is one of the nicest girls I ever knew. Possibly Olive Smith herself is the only other girl I know who is in the same class. I got Olive's letter on Friday & sent Mac a wire that afternoon. They were to be married at St. Jude's – Ol said in her letter "Of course you know that Mac lost her Mother & Father". Of course, I DIDN'T know & I'm wondering how it was – by accident, sickness or what – bad luck at anyrate & probably that's what hastened the marriage. Don't think I'll bother sending a wire to Phil Tait – won't be missed.

As a distinct contrast from today & yesterday, Saturday was a lovely sunny day with a gentle breeze. In spite of the fact that we were warned that water would be cut off from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. I took the opportunity of washing my blanket & mattress cover for the first time since I've been here. I used 2 packets of PERSIL & followed the instructions of Merle & also the directions on the box and as a result made a good job of it & I was very proud of my snowy white, fluffy blanket that I took to bed that night. Took much pride in showing it to the boys, most of whom have sent theirs to the laundry & regretted it very much. Reckon I'll make a marvellous husband for some lucky woman who will probably marry me for my money? As I said today's weather leaves much to be desired – its been cold, windy & rainy – July in February. God forbid I spend another winter here. In about 2 or 3 weeks, several Writers on the Parade doing New Entry course will be absorbed into Ships company, & I'm sure they'll have to shift some of us to make room. Wonder who'll go and to where! Went to the pictures on Saturday night in a weak moment & saw "Phantom Submarine" and "Blondie Plays Cupid". If I remember rightly I saw that with you at Bronte many moons ago.

Reverting back to Saturday afternoon, as it was very nice, I toddled down to the Baths after I finished my "dobeying", only to find that the "Middies" had it for the afternoon for some kind of swimming sports & we couldn't even look in. Be alright if Ships Company had some swimming events, but I think that's too frivolous in this great crisis (Unquote).

The only memorable thing about yesterday afternoon was that it wasn't worth while going outside, so I played 3 games of Monopoly straight, in the dorm. & lost each and then climbed into the hammock & read for a while.

Tug had a brilliant idea about changing & re-classifying indexes (or should it be indices) this morning & all of us have been working flat out on this all day & ordinary work had to go hang. I was just about to go down to work after tea, when I accidentally found Leslie Charteris first "Saint" novel – Meet the Tiger – so immediately settled down to read it, continuing after supper for a while & I got half way through. I put it down in order to sling my hammock & lo & behold it was gone. Whether it was again pinched or the original owner found it, I can't at this juncture say. It always happens like that – I think I've half read about 20 good books since I've been here...most annoying.

The way things are, I don't think I'll come home this month, but will wait till I feel prepared to bear the torture of the rail trip, or till something turns up (apologies to Mr. Micawber) So I'll spend this week-end in Melb. and dash out to do my dough at the Newmarket meeting at Flemington. As you may have noticed, my "Great Britain won on Saturday but I didn't have the courage to back it after losing on "Dream Girl" in the previous race.

By the way – re that ambulance book – I haven't got it, haven't seen it for 12 months and haven't the faintest where it is -ask Rita. Well Ma, as you can see, my alleged brain is only functioning in fits and starts tonight, so I'll say Goodbye now, as my supply of drivel and news has temporarily dried up. I got you papers last week on Tuesday night – a record. I mentioned this in my letter to Bub – her papers the week before arrived on the Friday afternoon. Hope either you or Bub send them this week too. I look forward to them.

Much love Mother dear, & give my best to the Warden & his wife.
Jim

P.S. My new watch is still no good so I'm sending it up to N.S.T. to be overhauled.

Flinders Naval Depot.
10th March, 1942

Dear Mum,

As you may guess your letter last night worried me a bit, but if you say you're alright I'll just have to take your word for it. I hope your poor face didn't get knocked around because I take enough punishment for the whole family in that respect. Its terrible to think that I wasn't home to do something for you when I'm sure you must have felt pretty low. Still I suppose its a good job you've got a sense of humour and "can take a joke" when its on you. I've always felt my hair stand on end when I see a female try to board a moving tram because you women are such poor judges of relative speed, but usually a man can judge instintively, so please don't do it again Mother, there will be another tram coming along soon and its cheaper than being laid up and having to buy new glasses.

Probably before you get this I'll be talking to you, as I'll try to get through tonight. I got the lottery ticket, but hope you noted the number – 6314 in the 835 lottery. Would have been funny if you'd got 5294 which is my official number. So you'd better keep a look-out for when the lottery is drawn and let me know so I can return the ticket for you to collect the "boodle". Your remarks about First Aid recall the question of the First Aid book – if I recollect rightly I think Merle clouted down on that book when she was over last year. I was surprised to see that Mr. Kelland had been accepted for the A.I.F. They must be easy to please now, because his physique and eyesight are not particularly good. However, once he has this eye operation you were talking about, camp life should do him all the good in the world and take away all the softness he acquired from driving a cab. What unit is he in? I suppose its something where he drives – possibly the A.S.C.

As I told you last week we had to shift our dorm. and at midday Wednesday carted all our goods and chattels back to BM2 and as it was very hot it was no picnic. The hot weather abated on Thursday and since then we have settled back into the usual Flinders semi winter style of climate. I'm glad we're back in BM as its much better being off the ground floor.

Yesterday was attended with a lot of hustle on account of Admiral Sir Guy Royle being down here. We had to march up the centre road for his benefit after work but I didn't even see him – his flag was flying from the masthead however, so I suppose he was kicking around.

I got a surprise on Friday night in the dorm. I just glanced idly at one of the lads reading "Pix", then looked again at the cover and sure enough it was Mel Foster, Pinto's old flame gracing the cover and also another photo of her inside. They are not particularly good ones of her but sufficient to recognize her. If you get a chance at any of the numerous houses you visit or at one of the Canteens have a look at Pix for 28th February and see what you think of Pinto's taste in fiancees. Naturally after seeing this I had to jog Pinto about it, so wrote to him on Saturday – I'll bet he got kidded about it if any of his cobbers found out about it. I thought I'd better do a bit of corresponding over the week-end which was very dull and dreary so I also wrote to Lyn. Waller in Darwin and George McGrath in Port Moresby. I trust they're both there when the letters arrive, and at the present time I wouldn't like to be in George's shoes.

With nothing to do and the Baths closed on account of some septic leakage, I had a mild interest in the races before I went back to duty at 4 p.m. As I had backed "Mercury Bay" with Unkovich up the previous week, I decided to follow it again as it was a light weight and I like the jockey, so I just had 2/- each way. The books down here offered 20 – 1 but it was a long way down the list of favouritism and they are usually pretty conservative down here, so I said I'd take S.P. Sure enough "Mercury Bay" ran a good third & with luck would have won the "Australian Cup". I waited eagerly to see if I had got 33 or 50 to 1 and was I mad when I found it started at only 12 to 1, so I wished then that I had taken the 20's they offered down here. Also backed "Spearmain" which seemed to be in it all the way, and Phil Wirth in the hurdle which fell to my deep regret, – I was going to back "Trent Bridge" which ran 3rd.

I didn't intend going to the pictures on Saturday night, because I didn't think I'd like Kitty Foyle. However, "Tug" saw it on Friday night and voted it a VERY good show so I showed faith in his judgement and went along and was glad I did, as its the best of its kind I've seen. Of course, being up here makes one a bit easier in judgement of pictures, but I really think it was marvellous acting on her part. There was one part in it made very humorous by circumstance. It was the scene early in the picture where the Dr. has just delivered the baby

and Ginger is holding it in her arms and a slide was flashed on the screen – "AB MORRIS wanted at the door immediately". The mob caught on very quickly and roared for about 5 minutes and the dialogue was completely lost.

The Supply Assistants here have clamped down on our morning milk now, & I can only get it occasionally and even then can't get the rich creamy drop I used to scoop from the top of a can. "Tug" is most hostile about it too.

I had a letter from "Selfridges" yesterday and thought it must be declaration of dividend. However, it appears that some twirp has been circularising "Selfridges" shareholders and telling them that things were crook or something & it was just an official denial and to say that the Coyl. is stronger than it has ever been.

Yesterday a lot of our Writers took worried looks with them and sat for their respective exams. of Pay Sub. Lieut. and Petty Officer Writer – in the way of the Navy, the Pay Subby exam was by far the easier. If these Pay Sub's get appointed to ships I'll scream, because I would have been with this bunch, but even now the prospect of a Commission doesn't make me envious, its just the fact that they might beat me to sea. The Engr. Commander had a chat with me the other day & said he'd still recommend me for a Commission if I'd go for it, but I told him I wanted to get to sea before I'd think about it. After I've done sea-time I might consider it again.

On account of the grave news we seem to be continually getting I think it won't be long before we get another cut in leave, and I intend to spend each one as if its the last. Merle mentioned that she would need white towels so I bought one of the big ones here for her yesterday morning for 2/8 – I think that's pretty cheap isn't it.

Last night we were working on our monthly return and it was late when I got up to the blocks and got your letter otherwise I might have rung you last night. The papers arrived O.K. last Tues. but I think I told you in my last letter.

Well Mother, that seems to be the lot, but I suppose I'll have a chat with you tonight. By the way, how is Percy going these days with his business affairs and how are the kids getting on at Bowral. Look after yourself Mum, and take things quietly for a while and please be very careful in future – I've only got ONE mother don't forget.

Lots of love and regards to all at 61 –
Jim

C/o Writers' Recreation Room,
Flinders Naval Depot.
17th March, 1942

Dear Mum,

Received your always welcome letter last night and am glad to see that you are getting back to normal. Too bad you damaged your dress but taken all round it could have been much worse, so we have that to be thankful for at least. I told Merle that you had a mishap, as I thought it would be better to TELL her as she would find out eventually and then you know what would happen, and I was able to assure her that you were as right as possible as a result of our telephone conversation. By the way you told me, didn't you, that Perce Curvey is alright, but in Merle's letter written the next day, you say that Aunty Maud hasn't heard from him. Which is it?

You don't mention our lottery ticket, so I assume that it has gone the way of all our tickets. You say you are getting one for Bub and calling it "Threads" – "She's always cut off cottons" – what do you mean by that? By the way, it appears that the Bronte Club has finished competition for the season, so don't bother sending the Monday's Daily Telegraph but keep sending Sunday's – both of them if possible. I picked up your parcel yesterday afternoon and as you may guess, the biscuits were pretty crumbly, but I enjoyed them, especially the ones with the raisins? in them. We had boiled eggs for breakfast this morning, but I can't stand them now, and filled up on your biscuits. The jam was there O.K. but don't bother about sending biscuits again Mum – they don't carry well, and I seem to have gone off sweet things a great deal. I may be getting old or it may be the Navy, but I could miss puddings, jam, cakes and sweets without worrying a great deal at all. In fact I take food very much as just "fuel" these days.

Early this morning I was awakened by the sound of pelting rain, and being only half awake, it was very pleasant to lie warmly in my blanket and finally doze off. It is quite cold now, with plenty of wind and lashings of rain – its the weather we understand. Went to the pictures last night to see James Stewart and Hedy Lamarr in "Come Live with Me" – quite an amusing show. Believe Jimmy Stewart got mobbed at the "Australia Hotel" last week by Melb. women.

I again played cricket last week for Ship's Company against New Entries and did well to take 4 wickets for 43 and a good catch. Unfortunately, when I was batting the fast bowler hit me rather low with a fast ball and I went down in a heap. After a little while I tried to continue but my nerve was gone and got bowled two balls later. I felt pretty crook on Thursday night and still carry the bruise, and had to take things a bit easy over the week-end. Speaking about Lyn Waller – I wrote to him at Darwin a week ago, but don't know whether I'll get a reply for a while, as I heard that he stopped a bullet in the arm during the raids – that would be most annoying.

On Saturday morning I played Squash Tennis at St. Kilda with one of the lads, a little fellow named Bill Watt who has been back about 3 months after spending 26 months in Darwin. He only got 3 weeks leave after all that time. Just heard that Darwin has been bombed again. After a strenuous half hour's play, we adjourned to the Shower room and I just noticed two other chaps there who had been playing on another court. I took no notice of them until one of them said "what are you doing down here Jim.". I looked up and found that it was a North Bondi Club chap who used to swim a lot in the morning at Bronte. I also bumped into him on one of my trips to Burragorang. Only know his first name – Don. He's working at designing gauges for munitions – said he'd give me a ring and we'd get together some week-end. Got a letter from Col Ayres (of N.S.T.) yesterday midday and then another from him last night to say that he is coming to Vic. to do 3/4 weeks course on Tank Tactics and that he'll be off every week-end, and hopes to see me. I'll be lucky if I do, as I intend to come home next leave week-end if possible. Bad luck, because I'd like to see Col.

Down at St. Kilda beach on Saturday afternoon and went to the dance at St. Kilda Town Hall at night with Bill Watt and had a middling time. I'm afraid I'm slowing down as far as Melbourne is concerned – need a change.

Helped Cyril in the digging of his Air Raid trench and we got the actual trench finished by lunch-time and Cyril started to cover it in during the afternoon. Had a couple of photos taken in connection with it. I'm not very struck on trenches myself – think there's too much possibility of them filling up with water and they are very poor protection at the best, but Cyril and Merle are very proud of it, so I said nothing of course.

Went down to St. Kilda again Sunday afternoon and there wasn't much

sun and having no shoots makes me sick. Took a few photos of the men and women of the St. K. Club who were on the beach with me. One of the girls has just spent a fortnight at Lorne, a beach about 90 miles from Melbourne where there is a Surf and apparently the weather was good, because she was almost black. She has bluey-black hair and it makes her look almost "native" so I took a couple of snaps of her and if they're any good, I'll see what I can do about getting them into "Pix" and earning a few bob.

The boys tell me that we had several distinguished visitors on Sunday, including a high Dutch Naval officer, General Blamey and Maj. Gen. Gordon Bennett so I suppose the place was in a panic.

By now, you will be getting over the shock of the "Perth" and the "Yarra". Of course I knew about the "Perth", but the first I knew about "Yarra" was when I read it in the paper.[3] I suppose you are very glad to know that I am well out of it and will be for a few more months. Of course you know what my opinion on that is but at least it must be a relief not having any worrying to do. Its a good job I've only got you to worry about with me – its certainly tough on a sailorman's wife.

As you will guess I had a lot of mates on the two ships and in some ways its harder on us than even relatives. They only lose one each, but we lose 20 or 30 at a blow. One of the Writers on the "Perth" was about to be relieved and one of the lads from here was already on draft. He is more annoyed than relieved about his escape. Some of the closer ones that are Missing are –

[3]The HMAS Perth was sunk on 1 March 1942 while retreating after the Battle of the Java Sea. Over 350 of the 681 crew members of Perth were killed, while survivors were captured and many endured harsh conditions as prisoners of war, including working on the Thai-Burma railway. HMAS Yarra was sunk after encountering a powerful Japanese Naval force south of Java. The Yarra ordered the small allied convoy to scatter and placed itself between the enemy and the convoy to buy time, engaging the Japanese ships with its small 4-inch guns in a desperate rearguard action. Eventually it was overwhelmed and sunk, and of her 151 crew, only 13 survived.

Neville Lyons	–	the schoolmaster acquaintance of Bubs – nice chap
Les. McMillan	–	Sick Bay Attendant who came down from Sydney with my draft and was a really decent type who would go out of his way to help. He lived at Charing Cross.
Frank Gaven	–	Supply Assis. from Queensland who played Rugby with me last year and was "Dally" Starr's best mate.
"Sandy" McNab	–	Writer from W.A. – I mentioned last year that he came with me the first time I ran over to Somers.
Ray Barker	–	Made Pay. Sub. Lieut on 1/1/42. Used to work with Jim Read and swam a lot with me in the Baths here.
Jack Innes	–	Leading Wireman – worked with me at N.S.T.

There were many others who played hockey or football with me and ones I had met at different times and found they were included in the Casualties. As well as the Navy chaps were Sergeant "Red" Sparks and Corporal Phil Will – who were very good friends of Pinto, and who were at his place every time they were in Sydney. Both were South Australians – you will remember they were with us when I was on long leave. Pinto would be rather cut up – both were great chaps. Writer Darwin went with the Yarra – his nickname was "Hedy Lamarr" – he was black headed and used to spend hours combing and brushing his locks. Well that's the way it goes I suppose, but I hope we don't lose any more as there'll be no Navy left for me....a melancholy thought.

I forgot to mention that my new Speedo costume disappeared from the Club at St. K. on Sunday but I'm hoping that someone put it away by mistake – can't think that anyone there would pinch it. I may need my costume when I come home on the next leave, if I can get through Bronte's barbed wire.

Glad you liked the photos I sent home – hope to get a decent lot from the ones in my camera now – as I told you it takes 36 and I've got about 11 still to take.

That's about the lot Mother dear, so till next time,

Love and look after yourself for me.
Jim

C/o Writers' Recreation Room,
Flinders Naval Depot.
23rd March, 1942

Dear Mother,

Very pleased to receive your ever welcome letter at midday and to read that you are getting over your mishap in good style, and also that Sydney is at last getting some rain. Apparently rain was general last week, because it rained considerably here, and I believe was a virtual deluge in Melbourne. Slightly amazed to hear that Bob Spence has gone off, and to an R.C. I suppose I'll be going that way myself "some day", but have no prospects at all in mind now. However, if your fortune teller keeps up her forecasts, I should have a very interesting year ahead of me, and I am looking forward to meeting the "fair haired girl" she has prophesied for me.

Had a letter from Bubs last week, and she seems to have the willies properly. She doesn't seem to be able to settle herself anywhere these days – I think she has too much imagination for one person. From the way she writes, I don't think she had received a letter I wrote about a week previous, but I suppose mails aren't too regular up there. Don't think I mentioned in my last that I had a letter from Jim Read, still in Mallala, to say that he has at last received his precious "Wings" and is now a fully fledged pilot. Also a letter from Pinto at Rathmines. He says that one of the Club chaps, Les May, is now living in Adelaide, and that he saw Sid Worrall in the street over there, so I suppose that by now he'll be home to his wifie and new baby, and I'll bet he's glad to be back. Pinto says he DID observe Mel's photos in PIX.

I was a couple of quid short in my pay on Thursday, & going round to find the cause of it, I find that I have been debited with £5/6/8 the cost of a rail warrant to Sydney. They claim that I had three last year, and we are only allowed two. That is, tickets for long leave. When I was supposed to get leave last May, a ticket was bought for me, but as you remember, my leave was cancelled and I went later on. I had to trace right back to this, and find out where the ticket was sent back for credit and absolutely prove I never had the use of it, before they would agree to put a credit through for me. Typical Navy blunder.

In my last letter I told you that I had two letters from Col Ayres of N.S.T. that he'd be coming to Melbourne, and on Friday he wired me to meet him on the Saturday, and by the grace of Chief "Tug" and a few beneficent Officers, I managed to get leave out of Watch and quit the Depot before dawn on Saturday morning and caught the 7 a.m. train from Crib Point to Melb., as usual getting out at Caulfield and going across to Merle's by bus. I rang Merle the night before that I'd be coming down, and she got into a panic, thinking that I had got a draft at long last.

Lunched at Merle's and she hopped in to town to meet Colin. As it happened, he met two friends of his (ex-Sydney chaps) just as he was going to meet me. One of them told me that he knows Noel Yeomans & his name is Charles Savage. After we left these brothers, we strolled round Melbourne in the glorious sunshine for a while, and finished up at the Olympic Pool, which I wanted to show to Col. We didn't have togs with us, and the ones for hire were ridiculous, so we had to be content with just being spectators. It looked most inviting too. From there we went into one of the Newsreel Theatrettes and put in an hour and then out to Merle's for tea. Col got on well with both Merle and Cyril. I forgot to mention that while we were walking round town, we bumped into Jack Saywell, who is a Lieut. in Col's regiment.

After tea, we buzzed off and I walked him all over St. Kilda until it was absolutely dark. We poked our heads in all the places of amusement and strolled or pushed our way through Luna Park. In spite of the black-out, Luna is booming, and huge queues were patiently waiting for each of the attractions. St. Kilda was swarming with people and thousands of £s must change hands there in connection with the amusements. Of course it is very cosmopolitan now, with Aussies, Yanks, Javanese and Dutch, looking very smart in green uniforms, and for physique and "stamp", putting it all over the Yanks. Col and I finally finished up at a dance at Palm Grove, where there are three separate dance floors and three orchestras for the one price of admission. Even with the three floors, it was terribly crowded and must be a "gold-mine" to the owner. During the week-end I saw a terrible lot of people I knew and saw several at Palm Grove including Celie's sister, though I didn't speak to her, and I was very surprised indeed and almost doubted my eyes, to see a class-mate of mine from Clevo there in civvies. Even when I spoke to him I was at first doubtful, but I was right and it turned out to be "Daisy" Dunnett. He is a plain clothed policeman and was down for three days on his first trip to Melbourne as a.d.c. to the

Comm. of Police, and liked Melbourne he said.

Col and I had a fair night at the dance, and had just enough dances to satisfy us, as it was quite warm and at 11.30 we skipped off so that he could see one of the Coffee Lounges. We had to wait in a line outside the Coffee Lounge in order to get in, and it was rather disappointing as on Saturday nights, the best artists are all out on jobs at broadcasting stations or at dances etc. I put Col on a "City" tram and walked home. Apparently Col missed his bearings in the black-out and took 3/4 hour to find Victoria Coffee Palace where he was staying after he got off the tram. He had to get directed to Melb. Town Hall and found his way from there.

During the recent heavy rains I spoke about, Cyril's trench got about 8 inches of water in it and Cyril and I set to and bailed it out on Sunday morning. Col arrived at about 11 o'clock and I took a photo of him in the back-yard and Merle took one of us together. We were going to play Squash tennis, but after taking some of the glorious sun on the beach and having a swim, we got to the Courts just as they were closing for lunch so we looked around for some for ourselves. Col had his mind set on a grill, but all the local cafes listed them at about 2/9 which we thought was too hot, so we finished up having a malted and buying tomatoes and fruit and cakes and eating it on the grass in the sunshine. After we finished that, we walked back to the Squash Courts and played a strenuous half hour game.

An Air Force Squadron Leader, quite a young man, was watching us from the spectators gallery, and when we finished he asked me if I'd like to play him. I offered to play for ¼ hour and Col could play the rest. He turned out to be a cracker-jack player and I was dead-beat at the end of my ¼ hour, and while sitting in the gallery watching him play Col the sweat simply poured out of me. Poor Col went 10 minutes and asked the chap if he minded stopping then. He couldn't drive his legs any further. A shower revived us partially, and then I walked him home, got changed and raced down to Powerhouse Club. Col wasn't in very good form for dancing and could just drag one leg after the other, but liked the idea of Powerhouse. I couldn't get them to take a photo of the two of us together, so in order to get him to have one taken I had to get mine done, so addressed yet another to you and you can expect it this week. I couldn't raise a smile at the critical time. Col had tea with us and then buzzed off to catch his train that left Spencer St. at 8 o'clock. We certainly got around, and both of us

thoroughly enjoyed the week-end, and the perfect weather played quite a part in our enjoyment.

Had a quiet game of Poker-Rummy with Merle and Cyril before leaving and Merle won a whole 3d. Gave her the 10/- for a bunny rug she has on layby. Cyril goes for a test as R.A.A.F. storeman today, but think his eyes will be against him. They're very poor.

I suppose you saw that there were 13 survivors from the "YARRA" They were very fortunate, but I'm afraid it will give false hope to the relatives of others. Borrowed "Tug's" bike this afternoon and sneaked out the back way and rode over to Somers. It was beautiful riding along in the sunshine and I enjoyed the trip over the old dirt roads and took a couple of rural pictures on my camera – am dying to see the results. Will keep me poor getting prints for all of them. Hope to finish them off this week-end. If all goes well, I'll be home on Saturday. Believe there is some congestion regarding trains which may stop me, but I'll let you know if I'm not able to come. Otherwise, expect me about midday Saturday.

Much love Mum –
Jim

Flinders Naval Depot.
1st April, 1942

Dearest Mother,

Well Mother, once again I greet you from my humble Monastery or perhaps prison would be a bit more apt. If that "Jade Rumour" isn't lying again I can send my letters free from now on, & that's all to the good. Whether you can do the same is something for you to find out.

To start from "taws" – i.e. when I left you on Monday's beautiful moonlit night at Central. To strain a point I'll say the trip was more interesting than usual for a start by the novelty of the strong moon setting off the bush-lands in a soft light that was restful to contemplate for an hour or so. After that I tried to settle down to the serious business of sleeping. Old "walrus whiskers" next to me didn't give me much space but I managed to put my feet up on the other side until we got to Junee where the compartment was filled right up. During the whole night I must have tried about 8 different positions about 8 times each and got 2 or 3 minutes sleep in each possie by reason of the fact that I was pretty tired. I was still battling for the shut-eye when we arrived at Albury and I just had time to wash my face and leap on to the platform almost leaving my strap behind in my haste. I was still wearing the overalls but had the sleeves rolled up purposely so that no badge showed. An officious Navy "pig" picked me up about being out of "Shore rig" and I informed him that I was R.A.A.F. and he said "Very sorry", and later as I was hurrying away from the train to get a bite to eat an Air Force Corporal picked me up and I politely informed him that "I'm Navee" – and he apologised. Only had time for cup of coffee and a slice of cake in my hand and back to the train.

The carriage I was in on the Vic. side was a new one and was silent and comfortable. I read and listened to the talk of the "Old and bold" (last war soldiers) who seem to have the tedious job of guarding convoys of ammunition etc. that go by rail and they travel in goods vans when they are on the job. Last trip took them three days to go from Melb. to Sydney – it was very slow and they were always getting side-tracked.

Got to Melb. at 11.30 about ½ hour late and I went straight out to Merle's

place. Found Merle a bit red-eyed on account of Cyril having got his call-up that morning to go in on Thursday. From all accounts she was very hurt that you didn't volunteer to come over to her and must have written a very tragic letter immediately. She says that she wants me to tell you to overlook most of what she says as she's been pretty distracted for the last few eventful days. She's taking it rather hard, but I think felt a bit happier after talking and being talked to by me. Cyril's mother is coming up, but Merle doesn't seem overjoyed at the prospect. However, I've told her that Cyril has done the best thing he could possibly have done and I honestly believe that. Financially I think she'll be able to manage, as he'll be getting 8/6 per day and 3/6 per day for her and after the baby arrives it will be another 2/6 per day so I don't think that it will be a great hardship and she is pretty safe to be handling the dough. However, I can understand that its pretty tough on her losing Cyril – he's definitely the right man for her and she says that he's the nearest any man she knows could go to Dad. So when you write to her go easy and give her plenty of encouragement, she's not like the rest of us and we can't change her so we'll just have to adjust ourselves to her liking.

She was very pleased with the first fruits of my camera and when Mrs. Osborne called in made me show them to her and Mrs. O. particularly enthused over my "pastoral scene", the full length of you and Perce and you and I.

Merle and I went in to town after I'd had a bite to eat and we got as far as the Prince Henry Hospital in the tram when the Air Raid Sirens went and we were bundled out of the tram and had to dive into the trenches near the Shrine in company with workers and Servicemen from Victoria Barracks. After spending ¼ hour there, the "All Clear" went and we walked in the rest of the way to town.

We went up to Myers looking for Cyril and after a search found him having afternoon tea with his cobbers and already looking very independent and very pleased. He only wishes they'd given him more notice. I'll feel sorry for him tomorrow morning as he's going to have a trying couple of weeks and if he survives that cheerfully he should be "jake". He had a yarn with us while we had a cup of tea.

Merle came as far as the station with me and then I went on in the Crib Point train. With great endurance I lugged my bag to the Police Office and was cheerfully received as an "absentee". Naturally I resented this, so they looked

back through the request book and had a look at my request form and saw that I was officially granted leave till last night so a cancelling entry had to be made to "back-victual" me onto the ship's books again. However, yesterday the entry had of course gone through making me "Checked to absence" and the Writers concluded that I had deserted or something and I stretched quite a few legs with the brazen way I admitted that I'd just had another day because I felt like it and "wasn't worried about consequences" – sticky beaks.

Found that a lot of new entries had moved in to the dorm. and my extra locker had been appropriated and my half empty kit bag, boots slippers and cushion were missing. However, an interview with the new owner of the locker produced them but my one locker isn't enough for my gear. I'll make out somehow! Found a letter from Lyn at Darwin waiting for me, not much in it, perhaps owing to the Censor. Gather he doesn't like it very much though.

This morning we had a fair drop of rain and I feel I've been seeing nothing else for weeks. "Tug" wanted me to instruct my successor in my work so I have been in D.O.(E) all day, more or less just coasting along. I'm to go into Ledgers tomorrow – payday. This afternoon, "Tug" surprised us by making a little speech as a farewell and as he'd been silent all the afternoon I think he must have been thinking it over as he went quite red while he said his piece and said how I'd be missed and that he hoped I would do as well and be as happy in the new job and that the draft I want is quickly forthcoming. When I realized he was quite serious I probably went a little pink myself. As "Tug" was genuine I feel it quite a compliment as he made no comment when Wright and Weedon went out. As he'd say – "Its little things like that which make the game worth while".

Speaking of Bill Wright, that worthy and the other Writers in the last course were "made" Pay. Sub. Lieuts. today and their appointments announced. Bill Wright came in to the office to tell us and there were tears in his eyes. All his hopes for a draft or I should say "appointment" to sea or an Interesting Base Staff have been dashed and he has been appointed to here and will have to work among us soon as an officer. In a way I feel sorry for the poor coot, I'm afraid he'll have a thin time at the ward-room here. None of the Pay. Subbies appointments were much good. One to Darwin, one to Fremantle, one to Brisbane, one to Sydney, one to Hobart and one only to a ship. So even with a commission I'm glad I'm not among them.

By the way, coming back in the train next to me was a chap in civvies who has just been "scrubbed" from Air Crew in the R.A.A.F. He couldn't make the grade as wireless Air Gunner and has been discharged – thought he was going to cry on my shoulder. He's been in over 5 months – will probably join A.I.F. this week.

The "subbies" went mad with the selling this afternoon and even I bought two more cap covers for 1/3 although I don't really need them. They were selling their uniforms, caps, whites and anything they could get cash on.

Must make time to send a letter to George McGrath tonight, so for the present cheerio. Don't forget to look out for our lottery ticket, I'm depending a lot on it. When I decide which photos I want enlarged I'll send the film to Kooka and let you pick it up even though I know its trouble. Don't trust them to send it – she said she wrote me last week, but I haven't got it yet.

Jim

P.S. Seem to be in for a cold - have the sniffles. Don't forget the Sunday paper.

Flinders Naval Depot
8th April, 1942

Dear Mum,

I was glad to get your letter last night especially as there has been a dearth of mail. Yours is only the 3rd I've had since I got back. There was a letter from Col Ayres last Thursday asking me to meet him in Melb. on Saturday but of course that was impossible and a letter from Bubs yesterday. Must be very dreary for her, but at least it's a change from the routine suburban life. She mentions that Don had a fall from his chair and got a black eye – he's always in some strife so he should grow tough. In view of the message regarding postage, I posted your letter and 2 others without stamps, but there seems to be some confusion regarding the new "free postage" so I've started stamping letters again. You didn't say whether you had to pay tax on my letter, so let me know next time. Also you omitted reference to our lottery ticket so I don't know whether it hadn't been drawn, or whether it suffered the usual fate. A letter from Kookaburra Snapshots came last night addressed "c/o Writers Recreation HOME"- too much like the truth to be funny.

The weather since I came back has been a continuation of Sydney's weather last weekend and as well has been very cold. Oddly enough, when I was in Sydney, it was a beautiful weekend in Melb. and now I believe that last weekend in Sydney was very warm, a direct contrast to here. We had hail, and I see by the papers that Marysville, 30 odd miles out, had a snowfall.

Very generously we were allowed to sleep in ½ hour on Good Friday and at breakfast were surprised to receive Hot X buns (1 each). I worked till 10 o'clock and then went to Church, the first time I've been down here for many months. Most of the weekend I spent indoors playing "Monopoly", cards and reading — that is our spare time. We did our usual working hours. On Saturday afternoon I had a couple of bets on the Melb. races but they were long shots that didn't come home.

Last Thursday the last batch of Pay Sub-Lieutenants got their appointments and Bill Wright who used to work in DO(E) with me has been appointed to "Cerberus". I certainly feel sorry for him. He'll be living in the big Ward-

room and I can imagine what a cold reception he'll get and how hard and long it will be for him to feel at home. Glad I'm not in his shoes. I wrote to Chief Writer Smith yesterday to let him know that I'm still sweating on "Canberra" but don't expect to get a draft till September —seems a long time.

As I told you before I'm in Ledger Office now but am just more or less the spare hand, office boy etc and haven't got anything important but I'm keeping my eyes and ears open. I didn't like the Chief in here, but he's shifted into another section of the building today, so that doesn't worry me any longer.

Forgot to tell you that I went to communion at 7:00 on Sunday morning. Only about 50-odd there and over 20 were in "middies". The chaplain shook hands with each one as we filed out. Good effort for me —twice to Church in the weekend.

Went down to the gymnasium and did enough to raise a good sweat and skinned my knuckles punching the bag without gloves. After that I did run around the parade ground and I did much the same this afternoon, but had to work yesterday.

Managed to get rid of my cold last week by buying eucalyptus and taking it in generous quantities on sugar. Still have a bit of a sniffle but that's the usual state down here. Weather has been such lately that I've been wearing Merle's long sleeve sweater every day and also got your gloves out of retirement and actually wore knitted socks a couple of days. Finished the fig jam last week and started on the "birthday cake" on Sunday. It was rather appropriate as it happened to be one of the lads birthday —not very exciting to have it down here.

I spent a couple of shillings on hair oil the other day as it will soon be unobtainable. Lads will look untidy then.

This morning I sent my spool of film to Kookaburra and want them to enlarge 13 different ones. As one photo, 'the pastoral scene' is to be enlarged to 6 ½" x 4 ½" I thought it would be damaged in the post and I'd like you to pick them up and take it out and send the others on. May be worth framing —remains to be seen. Cost of photos will be about 4/7, so ring early next week and ask if they're ready before going up to collect them. Saw on one of the Ledgers that Russell Caro had been and gone and I didn't see him at all.

That's about the lot Mum. Don't forgot to keep sending the Sunday paper, as I depend on it a great deal. Will be up the line this weekend and will report on Merle's reaction to Cyril's absence. Keep your chin up Mother and try not to be lonely —remember I'm always thinking about you.

Jim

P.S. Don't particularly want that last photo of myself. Keep it! J.

General view of Flinders Naval Base, HMAS Cerberus, 1930s. (Australian War Memorial, P00604.032)

C/o Writers' Recreation Room,
Flinders Naval Depot
16th April, 1942

Dear Mother,

Received your letter Tuesday night and didn't answer till this morning as I went to see "Pinocchio" last night and it was necessary to get in the queue at 6:15. It was quite a good show, for down here anyrate, but in my opinion not on par with "Snow White". Too bad we just dipped out again on a lottery prize – which got it, the number in front or behind? The chap in front had a lot of bother with his ticket as the girl tore it and had to get it initialled etc and delayed us at least 10 minutes.

You don't answer my query in the last letter, when I asked you if you had to pay tax on the letter I purposely sent unstamped! Although you don't mention it, I hope you can arrange to pick up the photos, and by now they should be on their way. I don't know when you sent last Sunday's paper as it didn't arrive till Monday, and Sunday's paper arrived yesterday midday.

Had a letter from Cyril last night. He asked to be remembered to you and seems to be shaking down and is taking everything VERY seriously. He has given me details of his new life, and I think he likes it up till now in spite of Merle sending wires to find out if he's well etc.

As per schedule, I spent last weekend in Melbourne with Merle and Cyril's mother. Mrs S. is quite remarkable for her age but is too "typically English" to be a source of quiet comfort. I did the right thing on Friday night and took Merle to the pictures to see 'Citizen Kane'—a rather heavy and involved show which, however, must be given points for acting and originality. Merle was glad to have the outing. As I had been led to expect in his letter, George McGrath wrote a joint letter to Merle and Cyril that was received the day before C. went into camp, and they were both highly delighted. George gave his explanation of his absence in his usual breezy style and Cyril just couldn't get over it.

Early rising down here makes me sleep-in up there, and it was 9:30 before I had breakfast. I went into town and bought a nice new leather case for my

camera for 10/6 at Herbert Smalls'. At Harrington's the same case was 16/-. I just had time to have lunch and catch the train to Newmarket and walk over to Ascot Race Course in time for the Hurdle Race[4]. It was amusing to see the number of horse cabs plying between the station and the course. As usual, the Hurdle winner was ridden by Laurie Meenan, who got an enthusiastic reception. I backed the winner of the next, 'Curia', and also 'Shutone' which also won. I pinned my faith to 'Chatasan' and Purtell in the big race but he's (Purtell) gone right off and never rides a winner lately. Had been told to back 'Watchguard' and was going to have 5/- each way and changed only after I got in the queue. Of course 'Watchguard' won, so I threw away about 4 pounds. After that I supposed was lucky to finish 10/- up.

Went out after tea without a single plan and just hopped on the footboard of a packed tram. Sharing the footboard was a Yank sailor, and I found that he had no plans so suggested we get together. He was a real good sort and his name was Bob Baker—he's on one of the Yank destroyers and his home town is Santa Cruz, California. We started off at Luna Park as it was early and went from there to the Palais where we stayed till the end. Bumped into Keith Coleman, one of the Club boys there. Had a photo taken with Bob and hope it comes out well — Merle is looking at it for me this week. From the Palais we went to a nearby Coffee Lounge and listened to the music and yapped. He's a bit of a music fiend so we got on pretty well. Thumbed a lift to the Junction and parted on very friendly terms and hope to keep in touch. When I write to him I'll give him our phone no. to ring on the off chance that I might be home, and if he does happen to ring, you could invite him to tea. Got a couple of packets of American cigarettes from him for Merle.

Sunday wasn't very brilliant, and I spent the morning photographing a kitten Mrs S. had dragged in and playing piano. Played 'crib' with Merle after lunch and then went down to Powerhouse for the usual concert and dancing. Learnt to play Crib down here, in case you wonder.

Too bad about Mr Kay. Sent Syd. a card yesterday. Think I'll be able to get home for my birthday and have an idea in which Bub may help me towards this end. Don't know if you've started to worry about a present, but if you could do it without any difficulty, the ideal would be half the plane fare home. I would

[4]Ascot (Melbourne) was one of five racecourses in Melbourne at that time, but not long after this race meet was acquired by the ADF and never reopened

save about 12 to 15 hours and I would be home for late tea on the Friday night, so would wake at home on May 9th. Fare single is about £5 17/6. I'll make full enquiries and book next time on leave if you agree, but if it's too much, please say so.

Hope you're feeling in the pink now—I've not been at top last couple of days. Eyes are strained through closing quarterly balances on Ledgers and weather is very wintery. Payday today so must to work.

Much love Mother,
Jim

P.S. Do you know what Mr Grantham's rank is now—just curious.

The Palais and Luna Park, St. Kilda, 1940s. (State Library of Victoria)

Flinders Naval Depot
Mess No. 57
21st April, 1942

Dear Mum,

As I'll probably get a letter from you tonight, I thought I'd get an early start and commence my letter now. Don't know if you can notice any difference in my writing but unfortunately I had the bad luck to lose my good "Conklin" pen and this is written with a cheap one I bought in the canteen. A fountain pen is indispensable to me so I had to get one straight away. If you're writing to Bub or talking to Percy, you might mention the fact and also that my birthday is very close. I know it sounds mercenary, Mother, but as they'll probably get me some present, it might as well be something I need. If no one gives me one, I'll have to buy one as I don't think this pen will be satisfactory for very long.

On Sunday morning we awoke to find a dense fog pressing round us. This cleared somewhat at about 9 o'clock and then thickened again. I went down to work first and then went round to church. There was a short sermon and I was just in a pleasantly sleepy state when it ended, so have no idea what it was about. When I came out of church it was a beautiful day, very little breeze and the sun warmed the old bones. After lunch a few of us wandered over the back towards Somers. We were almost there when I realized the loss of my good pen. Very decently the others spread out and we went about halfway back searching for it, but as we came through a lot of rough paddocks etc., I didn't have any great hope. By the time we had retraced our steps towards Somers again I was feeling miserable, because apart from the value of the pen, I felt a sort of attachment for it, having used it every day for the past 2 years odd.

Luckily for my gloom, when we got to the little shop that Somers boasts of, we found the place crowded with W.A.A.F.'s in overalls, who were doing a leisurely "march." The two groups became quite friendly and we must have sat talking to them for about an hour. Once again on our way home we went back by the same route but again had no luck.

For a wonder yesterday was fairly fine, so three other lads and myself had a run over the same track without success so I'm afraid I must consider it lost,

and I hope Lofty won't think too badly of me when he hears.

As usual my duty period up here doesn't give much in the way of topics for letters but there were a few incidents worth recording. Had a letter from Jim Read who will be promoted to Sergeant Pilot this week and transferred to an operational station.

A funny incident occurred that I don't think I mentioned before—One of the chaps got a call-up card for the militia which had been re-addressed to him—he has only been in the Navy 7 years—isn't it amazing!

Pay day Thursday and on that day we really work in here, and heave a sigh of relief when it's through and the cash balance checks O.K. After supper, 4 of us had a game of crib" for 1d. a hole. My partner and I won the first game but were badly beaten in subsequent games and finished up a couple of shillings to the back. I sat in on a Poker game and had better luck, making up my loss and a bit more besides. For the first time in my life I had a routine" and had it dealt to me pat." Only get one looker" but made up for it in the Royalties. Later on I bought 4 Queens so had quite a happy game.

Last night almost the same thing happened—four of us played crib—we won the first game and then couldn't do a thing right and lost a couple of bob. Sat in on a game of poker then and made my losses good again. Also had two Royalties again—bought 4 sevens twice. Tried my luck on Saturday in small each way bets on the races—had 7 bets and lost 3d. so that wasn't very dear for an afternoon's entertainment was it. Backed Portsmouth (2nd) Wallace James (3rd) and Duomint (2nd) so I suppose in a way I was a bit unlucky. Purtill broke a bad spell by riding 2 winners and a second. He had had 72 rides without a winner so he was just about due don't you think.

Worked late Friday night with one of the lads, and as we were walking up towards the blocks in the darkness, he was slightly ahead of me. Suddenly we were challenged by a roving sentry and at the same time my companion suddenly disappeared followed by a splash, a thud and a string of oaths. The sentry couldn't make out what was going on, so I heard him slip a cartridge into his rifle and I made haste to tell him that my cobber had fallen into an ARP trench, knee deep in water and with the sentry's help, I got him out, shaken and muddy and darkly muttering under his breath. I'm afraid the humour of it struck me

and I made matters worse by laughing rudely at his misfortune.

Had a letter from one of the girls at work who reminded me in the P.S. to put a stamp on her next letter, so I assume that she had to pay tax on her last letter from me.

Forgot to tell you last week that I had the Depot cobbler sole and heel my shoes and while I had the chance I also bought a new pair of shoes as they may be harder and dearer to get later on. Had tips put on the heels of the new shoes straight away. Received your letter and am glad to see my queries answered. Apparently tax should have been paid on my unstamped letter. In view of what you say about Lofty, you'd better drop your hint regarding the pen to Percy and see how he reacts. Your letter is my first since last Thursday so I was doubly glad to see it. Suppose I'll get a rush of them and then be battling to answer them all. A lot of new Entry Writers here at present—goodness knows what will be done with them all—one I know by sight from Bronte, but he's of a type I don't care for very much. Don't know his name yet.

If the photos are ready Monday as you said they are probably now on the way. Hope you had no trouble in packaging them etc. Should have told you not to send the spool of negative as I can wait till I get home for that.

Now that I've got your O.K. re air travel I'll ring A.N.A. today to try to make arrangements. Won't be able to pay them on Saturday as they'll be closed being Anzac Day, so will have to get someone to do it for me. Sincerely hope it will be O.K. By flying I'll be just about home before the train leaves Melbourne at 6:42pm. Suppose it's a fair amount of cash but might as well use it while we've got it. Could buy a new suit, but don't think I will as it will only mean more gear to look after. Don't send me any money, as I can manage with what I have in my book here. Read what you said about the two Gwenns. Young Cubitt isn't a bad kid—she'll be O.K. when she comes down to earth. I'm amazed "Tiny" said the same thing. I told you some time ago the way young Gwenn B. was going—she needs a good application of a heavy hand.

So Percy has at last got his own factory—I'll have to make time to hop in and have a look at it when I get home. Well Mother that's just about the lot. Only other point is the envelope I'm using—the seal on the back represents Cerberus." In mythology Cerberus" was a many-headed dog that guarded the

Golden Fleece or some such. The Latin means “always watchful”—I knew you’d ask in any case

Much love,
Jim.

HMAS Cerberus Crest. (navy.gov.au)

The post office and store in Somers, near where Jim lost his beloved Conkers fountain pen, 1940s. (State Library of Victoria)

Flinders Naval Depot
Mess No. 57
27th April, 1942

Dearest Mum,

Glad to get your letter today at midday —also received the photos and a letter from Bubs. Did you only get one of each of the photos or did you keep a couple of duplicates? Must take more care with the negative in future as they were spoilt by scratches on the film.

Have a lot of letters to write as I have one from Lyn Waller in Darwin to answer and also one that was waiting for me last night from George McGrath. George writes his usual breezy letter without telling any news, but he seems to appreciate my news to him. I also have one to write to a WAAF I was supposed to meet on Friday night, but in view of Cyril leaving for Wagga, I took Merle to tea and then home where she tried to ring you.

Didn't get up till 9 on Sat. morn. So had to scramble to meet one of the boys and play squash" at 10am. We had a particularly hard game with him getting a slight advantage and toward the end he was streaming sweat onto the floor and I was nearly blinded by the sweat running in rivulets into my eyes. With only a couple of minutes play left I suddenly went down on my ankle and twisted it badly and couldn't go on playing. Had a shower however and limped up to the tram and went into town to the Aust. National Airways which was one of the few places open.

They say that the normal 'plane leaves at 5:45p.m. on Fridays, but possibly it may leave at 2:30 and I am to ring the day before to find out which schedule will be followed. If we leave at 2:30 I'll be in Mascot at 5:30 but if it leaves at 5:45 I won't be there till 9. However, even in that case it will save the horrible train trip up and we could still manage to go somewhere I guess. I don't want a party" —too hard to make up any friends these days at any rate. (By the way the concession fare to me is £5.17.0)

Went from A.N.A. to the Shrine and had a poke around there and as it was a really perfect day, I took a number of photos of and from the Shrine. Had

lunch with Merle and we had a couple of games of crib in the beautiful sun in the back-yard.

Although my ankle was a bit painful I had an invitation to a party so went out to Elwood where it was held at a private home. It was one of those tame sing-song and game parties with a nice supper. I played the piano a few times and as the only passable girl there was interested in the piano, I managed to get her ear and beat off the opposition. There was also a seaman invited and he also came from Randwick —near Peters Corner. Managed to get home fairly smartly as I got 2 car lifts. Examined my ankle and as it was swollen I inflicted some "Sloans" on it and went to bed.

Woke early in the morning and helped Merle pull down her photos and mirrors and pack them. The sun was glorious again and I took a walk to the Park and flower garden near St. K Town Hall. The flowers were beautiful and the leaves on some of the vines were really beautiful too. Had my camera out just as two dogs started a fight so should get a good action photo of the brawl.

Had an invitation to visit my "girl" of the party, so trotted out there and we took in the lovely sun at Elwood Beach and I wouldn't have minded a swim. By a coincidence saw Nan Speirs the first girl I actually met in Melb. —she was with a Yank soldier —with my usual good manners I gave her a polite hello. That brought up the topic of "Powerhouse" with the girl I was with (Jean McIntosh) and she mentioned that she knew one of the hostesses —Ruby Orr. That's the girl Pinto told me to get in touch with at first but I'd never met her there. We actually called at the Orr's home but no-one was in so I didn't have a chat with her as I'd hoped. Rang Mrs Marshall and she said that Pinto was in Melb. the week before on a "hurry" job. Since I saw him last he's had a trip to Port Moresby. Don't think he could have seen George, but Mrs M. says he met the ex-barman from Lynch's Hotel Narooma —amazing! Must write to Bill.

(Had a letter from Selfridges —Directors recommend dividend of 6% — not bad for wartime—they made £50,000 profit)

Had tea with Jean's mother and aunt and played their piano for a while — I've never regretted my "musical" knowledge. Had to scram early to get back to Merle's and pack my goods and chattels including civvie clothes and my good uniform. Had to use an old kit bag of Cyril's. By the way, I forgot to mention

that he looks very well in "blue". He has browned up a bit and looks more pepped-up and boyish —the forage cap makes him look 10 years younger and I think Merle feels better now she sees how well he looks in the Service.

The trip back last night was a trial —carriage was packed, it was also springless and the seats were hard and my ankle was throbbing.

Went over to Sick bay with my ankle this morning almost wished I hadn't as there were scores over there with nasty colds and I was scared to breathe. Nothing wrong with my ankle apparently —got it inclined and tightly bandaged. Had to go to work as usual and was going flat out all day. 'Fraid I find Ledgers pretty dry and boring. One of the chaps at Sick Bay had his whole hand swollen from a poisoned finger —similar case to mine last year—he got it through a blister, but they put him "off" to lance it, not just a "local" like me.

Don't know if I mentioned it, but I've been getting the Sunday papers O.K. and they are a great consolation to me. Believe that St. K. Palais de Dance and Luna Park are being shut down —taken over by the Yanks.

Will miss Merle a great deal —it has been a great thing for me, but think the change should be good thing for her and I'll manage O.K. Will have to do my own washing and mending etc. now.

Be seeing you soon, I hope,

Cheerio
Jim.

P.S. See what you can do about a gift pen for me, won't you! Try Alderman T. Yeomans!

P.P.S. Left my blackberry jam on its side for the weekend and there's juice everywhere. Only finished your cake last week.

By the way what is Tom doing for a living now—has Placer closed down?

Flinders Naval Depot
30th April, 1942

Had a parcel from the R'wick Fund yesterday.

Dear Mum,

Excuse the scrawl but I'm writing amid the crowd at Sick Bay, where I have to see Dr this morn. to see that my ankle is O.K.

Received your letter last night and am pleased with your plans for the 9th. The only two worries in that connection are – will you be quite happy as the "spare" lady –I've got to get hold of a partner. I took a risk and wrote to Olive Smith last night for that purpose but am not optimistic. Still I suppose I'll manage to dig somebody up. Trouble is I want to get someone who would mix well.

Saw the Commander yesterday morning –had my request for leave from Friday 8th till Tuesday 12th granted O.K. I was a bit dubious about it because there is a solid "buzz" going round that we are to get a couple of weeks leave from May 15 for "Port Watch" and June 5 for "Starboard Watch" (that's me). IF it comes off as everyone seems confident it will I'd like to have a trip to Kossie as I don't think anywhere else would be very interesting at that time of the year. Wouldn't be very hard to take either, the way I feel. If we do get 2 weeks with a spare week-end thrown in, I'd still have a week at home as the Kossie trip is only 10 days. As soon as I hear definitely I'll try to make a booking.

Wrote to Pinto last night before I got your letter, but put a P.S. about the dance. Will write to Bub tonight and she'll get it when she gets home.

Payday today so will be flat out from now on – will wire £5.17-0 to A.N.A. to pay for my plane trip, and I'm looking forward to it whether I fly in the afternoon or night.

Dr. ordered me to get ankle dressed once more and then not to come again. Hope Paula's baby is O.K. – 3 ¾ is small. Give them both my best wishes.

Cheerio Mum,

See you soon,
Jim

P.S. Good news about Italians!

The Flinders Naval Depot Hospital, 1930s. (Australian War Memorial, P00604.027)

Flinders Naval Depot,
Mess No. 57
May 3, 1942

Dear Mum,

Received your letter on Friday night, and the paper that I knew you had sent early in the week arrived at midday yesterday. As it's only a couple of days since I last wrote, there is very little news to retell, as you may guess. My ankle is just about right now and I am no longer attending Sick Bay for dressings, which is a blessing.

I wrote to Merle c/o 81 Forsythe St, Wagga, yesterday so hope that will find her, and enclosed the two photos she wanted. She should be in good hands with the Macs.

Did my first wash yesterday of shirts, underclothes and hankies. The day started off gloomy, but at midday cleared a bit and as a strong breeze was blowing I got right down to business. "Blueing" the shirts is still a minor mystery but I made a good attempt at it yesterday and everything looked pretty white in spite of the amount of dust that was blowing around. The biggest problem was getting a vacant space on the line to hang them. I ironed them last night and they seem to be wearable. I'm leaving my collars and cap cover and also socks which need mending for you to do, so hope you don't mind.

In between washing I listened to the Ascot Races which were run every 20 minutes and the only bet I had "Penaton" (2/- each way at 7-1) limped as he went to the post and ran nowhere. I had a 4 place card for 1/- and picked "Reception", "Sue Belle", "Tuhitarata" and "Atlas". Reception and Tuhitarata won. Sue Belle ran 3rd and Atlas only had to be placed for me to win £2/5/- and I thought it would, as it won at Ascot last time, but apparently it ran nowhere and I didn't hear the race as the last race is not broadcast. So that was stiff luck. I thought the money would have come in very handy, especially as I lost at Poker last night. I had intended going to the pictures but it's necessary to get in a huge queue at 6:30 to get a seat and I just couldn't be bothered. My bad luck was amazing at Poker as I was tossed 3 times on full hands by a chap who is the worst mug but the luckiest player I've seen.

However, I won Thursday nights so managed to keep a small balance. Don't worry about me getting in too deep.

Merle gave me an old leather kitbag of Cyril's to cram more of my gear in last weekend, and in spite of being split at each corner I thought it was worth keeping so left it at the bootmakers to be stitched. I didn't anticipate that it would cost me 4/6 though, but apparently it was hand stitched and took a fair while. Should be good for weekends in Melb. As the case would be too big now I won't be taking washing up.

I'm writing this down at work and am really glad I'm duty weekend, as it's blowing and raining and probably I'll sling the old hammock and snuggle into it this afternoon. Now however I must do some work, but will knock off at 10:30 and go to Church. Think next Sunday is Mother's Day so will be home with you then. Hope to wire you Thursday or Friday as to whether I'm leaving Melb. at 2:30 or 5:45 and hope it's the former.

See you soon,
Jim

P.S. Got one of the lads to order photos of Yank Bob Baker and I hope to pick them up and bring them home with me.

C/o Writers Rec. Room,
Flinders Naval Depot,
Mess Room 57-BM2
14th May, 1942

Dear Mum,

Just to let you know I am once more on the job (and how!) and that there's no place like home. The trip down was pretty tough but I must be getting hardened to it. As there were 8 in my compartment, I bailed out and slept in the corridor. In spite of my coat it was cold and I would have appreciated a rug. Didn't seen to ever be properly asleep but must have dozed all the time as the night passed fairly quickly. Found a bruise on my left hip last night, probably caused by my night on the floor.

The Vic. Train was a bit late so I had time for breakfast at Albury. Bumped into an old Clevo. boy Ivan O'Neill who is now a Stoker in the Navy and we hung together after the train got to Melb. Had a shave and lunch at Navy House and then went to the "Plaza" and saw Melvyn Douglas in "Our Wife" –-just another show. Of course any picture of Melbourne town would not be complete without cold and rain and we had plenty of both.

Fortunately it eased for a while as we made the trek from Crib Point to the Depot, for which I was duly thankful. Letter from George McGrath waiting for me and I replied last night giving him all the noos. Also a letter from a lass I met in Adelaide to tell me of her engagement and giving me the Adelaide gossip.

Yesterday down here was once more the scene of intermittent downpours which left churned up mud and great pools of water as evidence. Today is wet but not half as cold, although when we woke the wind was most unpleasant. I had a good session down at the gym last night and am starting my preparation for Kossie. Will probably end up at the Hotel as possibly the Chalet won't open at all. Men going on leave tomorrow so Pay day today will be pretty wild. Will try to enclose lots of photos I want and you can call at Kooka at your convenience.

Cheerio Mother –-Your affectionate son,
Jim.

The Spirit of Progress, the premier express passenger train that ran from Melbourne to Albury, 1938. (National Library of Australia, John L. Buckland collection)

Flinders Naval Depot,
Mess No 57-BM2
19th May, 1942

Dear Mum,

I'm confident that there'll be a letter from you tonight so I'll start my epistle now. Only today I posted per registered mail a package containing my watch and you should get it before or with this. The trouble is that the winder broke again – instead of just stopping when it's wound, the winder just gives and breaks off. I felt so mad I could have jumped on it. If Mr Whitehead won't fix it free, just kick it to pieces, I'm sick of it. Glad I've got my old dependable ticker with me.

This place continues to amaze me – the amount of rain that can consistently fall and the small amount of sunlight we can get along with. Saturday wasn't a very good day but I had to take the opportunity to do my washing as there was a bit of wind. By taking too long with my washing I missed out backing "Count Cimann" as I intended and of course it won. The other bets I had were unsuccessful so I was most unhappy at not getting the first winner.

Went to the pictures at night and managed to iron my shirt and underpants before I left which was just as well because someone diddled the iron and when I tried to iron my pajamas etc on Sunday it would not heat. The picture programme was quite good – "Stardust" was quite bright and a girl sang the song "Stardust" very well. The other picture "Scotland Yard" was acceptable so I was well pleased.

With about half the personnel away, I am now in complete charge of a Ledger and have plenty to do, so couldn't get to church on Sunday. After lunch six of us went out the back on a "commando raid", armed with cardboard boxes for mushrooms and a suitcase and pillow slip for apples. After walking about 4 miles through sloppy muddy fields we arrived at an orchard and in 5 minutes simply blitzed several trees and staggered off accompanied by the loud barking of dogs. We were highly delighted with our success and when we got a safe distance I worked out that I had 35 lovely fresh-picked apples in my pockets alone. We picked up a few mushrooms on the way back but as there were only enough

for 1 or 2 we gave them away.

We pooled the apples when we got back and in spite of eating half a dozen each on the way back, we still got 31 each so that wasn't a bad afternoon's work, eh? And they were such lovely crisp juicy apples too – I'm getting a bit sick of them now, but they can't do me any harm. Felt quite tired at night after tramping so far and it was no effort to get to sleep.

Mail has been very scarce for me lately but it saves me the trouble of writing. Sent Bub a telegram on Friday so hope she got it O.K. Midday mail yesterday brought a cheque for £2-18-6 from Selfridges representing 6% dividend less 1/6 tax so that's very handy with our leave approaching, and I smacked it into the Bank today.

20.5.42 Letter from you arrived today and first thing I noticed was the 2½d stamp – such extravagance! Also a letter from Bub, Merle and the Sunday paper arrived at midday. The Aust. Broadcasting Comm. put on an orchestral concert last night but I heard that it would be highbrow (which it was) and didn't go. It's ridiculous putting on "entertainment" like that and expecting the forces to appreciate it. Of course the Show got a very mixed reception. Noticed a coincidence this week. We had an entry, a seaman named George Thomas Yeomans who lives in Rae Ave, Edithvale and he writes remarkably like you do!

Neither Merle's or Bub's letters contained much news but the grammar and spelling in Merle's made me wince – she's terribly careless, however, seems quite happy for the time being.

In regard to your recommendation re trip to Kossie, I'm afraid that I can't see eye to eye with you. To try and put my reason in words it's something like this. Up there I'll be waited on etc. I can sleep in and not feel guilty about holding you up, and I can take a choice of varied menu.

However that's only a small part of it – I'm really sick of cities, trams, streets and noises etc and also hustle and bustle, and I do need some out of doors exercise, while if I were home all the time I can't think what would occupy me in the open air. Up there, it will be a change of climate and I do like skiing. Don't forget that it's salt air here. I hope you won't think that it's just that I don't want to be home, but I'd get too restless I'm afraid and the break would

do me no good. With all the lads away I'd be hard put for company. Don't worry about me relaxing – that's just what I will do up there, because at present I feel that my nerves are strung tight.

There's still the question that I'll not be able to get home in time to go on Friday night and in that case will have to leave on Sunday night for Cooma. In any case I'll have 5 or 6 days at home and in that time will do little more than play the piano, sleep and eat.

Navy House are getting me a billet at a private home this weekend so I hope they're nice people. I'll probably get on at any rate – you know that I mix pretty well, and I'll give you an account of it next week no doubt.

That seems to be the lot Mother, so till next time, cheerio and tons of love

Your affectionate son
Jim

Hotel Kosciusko with staff building, 1930s . (Thredbo Alpine Museum, 2020-455)

C/o Writers Rec. Room,
Flinders Naval Depot,
Mess No. 57
26th May, 1942

Dear Mother,

Once again I have the use of a typewriter, and can bang away much more happily than when I'm writing with a pen. I'll probably get a letter from you tonight, so I'll make an early start to relate the happenings of the past week-end. By the way as soon as I'd posted your last letter I realized that I'd forgotten to answer your query as to whether I wanted the enlargements of my photos sent down here... Well, that was the original idea, and I hope you have already posted them, but if you haven't, use your own discretion because if they don't arrive by Wednesday night next week I won't get them, as I expect to leave here midday on next Thursday (June 4th). That cunning move was arranged with a view to catching the "Snow Train" from Sydney on Friday night, and just by the way will save me at least £2.5.0 because Friday is the last day of the cheaper price. Apart from that it will be a darn sight more comfortable travelling up on Thursday night which should be rather slack, than with a horde of screaming noisy matelots. As I'll have to go back a day earlier than the rest, that will also obviate waiting in queues and travelling with a mob.

No doubt you are anxious to learn how I fared in Melb. without Merle's hospitality. As I'd been working solidly all the week I felt very sick of this dump, and felt that travelling up in the crowded "special" train after being lined up for half an hour and inspected would give me the willies, so I put it up to my divisional officer and had lunch here and at 1 o'clock caught the bus usually reserved for Cooks who do broken shifts, and went to Frankston in it and from there caught an electric train into town. Went up to Navy House and got the address of my billet, ringing up first to be sure that someone was home. My billet was with a Mrs. Sterrett at Kew, and I learned that she was the lady I'd spoken to about a billet the day I arrived from Sydney, and she had seen my letter when I wrote a formal request and took me herself. She has quite a nice home and a car, a daughter who is a Physical Culture Instructress, a husband in the army, and a son who has just come back from the Middle East with the R.A.A.F. They appear to be upper middle class, daughter and I think son, had

university education.

Had tea with Mrs. S. and daughter, and on account of place being near the banks of the Yarra, we had mushrooms that were picked up by the girl when she went riding that afternoon. Mrs. S. had to go to some organization, so I took Shirley to the local show and saw "Forced Landing" and "Great Man's Lady". The second picture reminded me very much of "Citizen Kane".

Mrs. S. had said that she would prefer me to stay in bed for breakfast to save setting a table, so nothing lothe I did just that, and got up and had a shower afterwards. Once again the skies were gloomy with the chance of more rain, and I honestly haven't seen the sun out for more than 5 minutes since I came back from Sydney. Went into town and bought a filter for the camera. Its just a piece of optical glass coloured yellow, but by the price you'd think it was gold! Booked 8 seats at the Comedy Theatre for Mrs. S. for next Friday night and was very lucky to get 8 together. "He stayed for Dinner" is on there now and I believe its a very good show. Went back to Kew for lunch and then after listening to the first two races, and incidentally tipping both winners, (to their amazement) I went cross-country to St. Kilda and popped in to see Clarrie and Rene, Merle's friends who have my uniform, and I asked them to keep it there until I come back from leave. Had a cup of tea with them, but didn't get asked to tea as I expected as they were going out to Clarrie's mother's place at Deepdeane, and they invited me out there. However I had a date with a girl at Elwood, so didn't want to go far from St. Kilda which is fairly close. I rang the girl thinking she might invite me out to tea, but as her brother and sister-in-law and their kiddies were out there, she couldn't very well do that. Remembering Merle's admonition, I then called in to see the two Miss Wildes and they simply took it for granted that I'd come for tea and didn't even ask me, so I chatted politely with them until about 7.30. They remind me very much of Aunt Putt and Aunt Kate? or was it Aunt Mag?

Called for the girl at Elwood and we started dancing at a place called the Dorchester, and her brother, who is a P.O. in the Navy and his wife were already there. We only stopped there about half an hour, and the floor was crook and the band was worse so the four of us left. A banjo in the band was what decided me, it was the straw that broke the camels back. From there we went a couple of stops in the train to Prahran and went into Leggetts which is a huge dance floor and was very crowded. However, the orchestra was a decided improvement and

the floor was O.K. so we stayed. It was convenient for me that the girl's relatives were with us, and when she suggested that they could look after her as they were staying at her place, I readily agreed as I had to go to Kew. Fortunately I got fairly good connections on the way and was in before 11a.m.

Noticed Air Force clothes strewn round the house so concluded rightly that the son and heir "Ronald" was home and met him in the morning. He was industriously ironing his uniform and burnt the pocket flap, so you can understand how happy that made him, but as the day was quite cold he would have to wear his top coat in any case. The family went out to an army camp to visit Mr Sterrett and although they said I could stay and get my own lunch and then lock up, I left with them. Rang up Mrs. Marshall, Pinto's friend but apparently not at home.

Went in to town first calling at Navy House and met one of the original Sydney draft Marty Lang and we went out to "Powerhouse" for lunch and stayed there all the afternoon dancing and singing, as outdoors sport was impossible. Met some new people and was enjoying myself so I rang up the Elwood girl and called off the invitation I had to tea. Stayed at Powerhouse for tea and bumped into a Bronte chap who is in the Air Force. He isn't a club member but is often down at the club and the dances. We had a distinguished visitor later on, Squadron Leader Keith (Bluey) Truscott Australia's airman hero who has just returned from overseas. He was a Powerhouse member in peacetime, and after being officially introduced just mingled with the mob. In spite of the fame he has had lately he seems quite unassuming, a bit different to what Bluey Fuller the hero of the pick-a-back plane landing was.

My eyes fastened onto the little bits of ribbon on his chest – The Distinguished Flying Cross with bar. Quite by accident I had the opportunity of a chat with him, being introduced by an acquaintance, and it was hard to believe that he had shot down at least 20 planes, killed scores of men and been shot down in the Channel himself and was now talking casually to us. You'd think his experiences would leave a visible-mark, but beyond being very much pro-English nothing out of the ordinary was noticeable. I saw by the paper that he intends to marry an English girl and settle there after the War so that explains it.

Went into town to the Y.M.C.A. and stayed the night there. I had a bed

in a cubicle on the fifth floor and though I was tired the bed seemed very hard and I didn't get a great deal of sleep and was awake when the porter came to call me at 5.45. Got dressed and dashed across to the station and caught the electric train to Frankston and from there a number of us got a taxi from Frankston to the Depot. Its the first time I've done that but it seems worth while and I'll probably do it again next Melbourne leave. Of course as soon as we got to Depot we had to dash in and start working straight away.

Wednesday. Received your letter at midday yesterday and the paper last night, also a letter from Col Ayres of N.S.T. who is back in Vic. and wants me to meet him this week-end but unfortunately I'm duty. I also want to report that its raining again to day – that's 17 days since I saw the sun – wouldn't think it possible, and if the weather for my leave isn't good I'll break down I think. Definitely lost all my good tan so hope to pick up some at Kossie. Wrote to the Govt. Tourist Bureau yesterday and enclosed deposit. By the way the photos arrived O.K. and I'm very happy about some of them. Too bad the indoor ones of Bub and Don didn't do so well but they were slightly underexposed and it was really only an experiment. Bub should be pleased with the one of Don outside, as its an excellent child study and enlarged well. Notice they printed a couple more than I asked for, so hope you didn't have to pay too much. As I told you previously I bought a quality "filter" on Saturday and expect it to help me to get some excellent results.

Thanks for the Dream home, would be very nice if it came off and we're due to win something. I suppose its drawn by now. Glad to hear Pinto is improved, must write to him, haven't had time as yet as I'm doing two people's jobs while they are on leave. Give Paula and Sid my regards if you see them and tell them I expect a look at the baby when I'm home. By the way don't go tiring yourself out with jobs round the house as I'll have tons of spare time in my second week and will do my best to help.

That seems to be the lot this time - see you soon.

Loving son,
Jim

P.S. David Jones are making a badge for me to be ready on June 4th - so ring the "Regalia Dept" on the 3rd & find out if its finished.

Flinders Naval Depot.
2nd June, 1942

Dear Mum,

For once I got your letter in good time – i.e. at midday yesterday. Also had a letter at the same time from Lyn Waller in Darwin, and he seems a bit more contented now, but it seems like a dogs life just the same. I suppose that at the present Sydney is all agog at the war being daringly brought to her front doorstep, and I must admit that when we first got the news of subs. being sunk in Sydney Harbour, we thought it was someone's idea of humour. Since it has been confirmed everyone has talked on every angle of it, and after all we really admire our friend the enemy for such an attempt, and feel sure that it was nothing but luck that prevented considerable damage being done – of course it was suicidal but nonetheless, deserved top points for originality. It certainly must wake the authorities up now, and yet I still feel its impossible that such a thing could have happened – trust it won't stop our leave – authorities reactions to such things are very temperamental.

Pleased to read all the bouquets and praise my Mother got at the Coffee Lounge, but take it easy Mum, you mustn't try to take all the praise (or all the work). Please tell Ross that I made numerous enquiries among the Supply Assistants and also at the A.O.V.'s and the Victualling Office, but his book hasn't been sighted. Also made enquiries about his parcel, but the only one for Ryan at all was for Ordinary Seaman S.A. Ryan.

As you can guess there is very little news, however I received a letter from Col Ayres of N.S.T. telling me that he is back in Victoria training again and wanting to meet me last week-end and that he'd gave all the news till he saw me, but of course I was duty and couldn't meet him. Had a letter the next night from one of the N.S.T. girls telling me that Col has become engaged to Pat Thornton, one of the girls in there, so I see what the news was he wanted to tell me.

Fortunately, Saturday was a better day than most we've had lately, so I did a fortnight's washing and with difficulty found space to hang them out. With a bit of luck I got my shirts dry enough to iron that night, (I'm a real wizard

now) and did all the remainder on Sunday afternoon.

Went to Church on Sunday and the sermon was preached by Dr. Button the moderator of the Presbyterian Church, Victoria and he wasn't too bad, only trouble was all the matelots coughing and barking all the time. The lads came back from first leave on Sunday afternoon looking most unhappy, and for that reason I'm glad I'm second leave. The West Australians travelled all the way home and back for just 8 days at home.

Have given myself a treat at the pictures lately, saw "Sunny" on Friday night, good musicale, and last night my favourite Tommy Dorsey and his band in "Las Vegas Nights" – I had already seen it once, but it was much to my peculiar taste and I couldn't miss it.

As you may bet, I am counting the sleeps like young Allan now, and it will only be two sleeps and two lashings of the hammock and I'll be on my way. The clothing store will be open for an hour tomorrow, and although I should save my money for leave I think I'll invest a quid in pyjamas, singlets, ties, tooth brushes and things I need more or less badly – seems the good form don't you think.

Writers have been getting a number of drafts in the past week and I go green with jealousy every time someone gets a good draft and not me. One went to the "Australia" last Monday, one to the "Manoora" on Tuesday, I would have liked that, and one to the "Hobart" on this Friday, and a Leading Writer, a cobber of mine goes to the "Adelaide" so I'll give him our phone no. etc and tell him to pop out any time, - he's a real little old woman in some ways and would like popping out occasionally for a cup of tea - if I can see him when I'm home, I'll put him in O.K. at the Club.

Wrote to Pinto last week and sent it c/o his home address for safety so his Mother could take it to him. Well Mum, there might be more I want to say, but works calls – see you Friday.

Much love,
Jim

Don't forget to ring D.J's about my badge. Noticed you used 2½d stamp again - naughty!

C/o Writers Rec. Room,
Flinders Naval Depot,
Mess No. 57
21st June, 1942

Dear Mum,

Really shouldn't attempt to write because of the frame of mind I'm in – miserable as a bandicoot and twice as lonely, but I've time now and mightn't have tomorrow. The cold, and darkness probably contribute to my state of mind but I feel very low. Several Writers got good drafts while I was away, and as one is supposed to be going to the "Canberra", you can imagine how I feel about it – however I'll investigate that tomorrow. To make matters worse, I believe "Home Leave Passes" have been cut out in view of restricted rail travel, so goodness knows when I'll be home next. Things may be brighter by daylight and I suppose I'm not likely to be unhappy because I'm tired and my surroundings are quite cheerless.

Before I forget, I can't see my old gold Writers badge anywhere – is it still at home? I just want to know – it should be there.

Sorry things went so awry at the train last night, but I had to get that luggage rack as my seat had gone. The men were pretty rowdy but I had the rack to myself and could at least stretch out. I stayed fully dressed complete with overcoat and covered by rug, but I was still cold, especially my feet and later on my hands. However, I dozed a lot and the night passed quickly. Got to Albury at 9 o'clock and had breakfast – it was colder there than at Kossie. Felt better after breakfast, I read the literature Celie provided till we got to Seymour – had a snack there and on to Mel. which we reached at 2.10. Just walked to another platform and came straight on to this dump – everyone most unhappy! Had to get my bag and hammock and then fix up my locker etc. Brought down to reality by the tea – Brr –. Listened to "Hit Parade" after ten and wrote to George McGrath – doesn't seem to be any harmony among the chaps – all jealous of the drafts like me I guess – what a fool of a life for a "man" – down in this dump – 14 months now – makes me shudder.

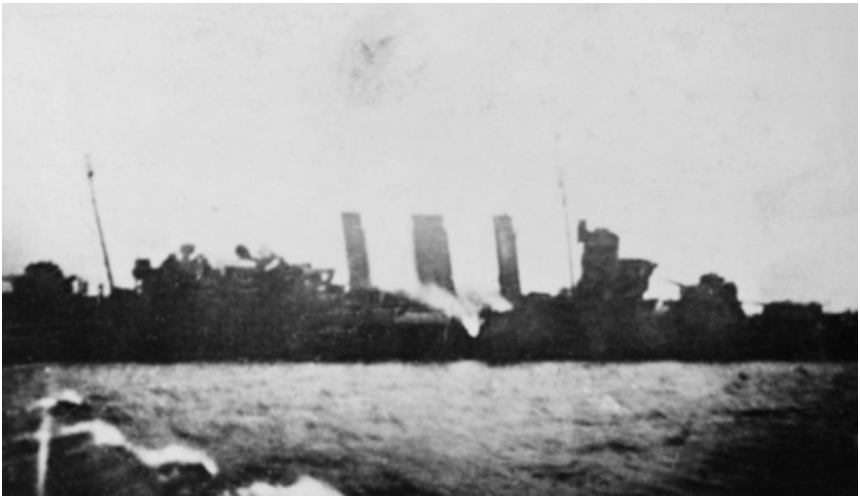
By the way, I forgot to tell you I found out who Pinto's "Nancy" is – it's

Mel's married sister – great friends with Bill – Mrs Bain doesn't think there's any love lost between the two girls. Think I told you the Bain's house was named "Bronte". – I'd give £10 to go to the "Aussie" with Pinto, or any ship for that matter, if I could go straight away. Heard that my old Divisional Officer, Warrant Writer D'Arcy Larrant was killed in the way to Colombo in an Air raid – very decent chap – he was the one that liked my piano playing at Chief Writer Smith's send-off.

Sorry to have to write a "moany" letter Mum, may get it out of my system – will write to Harden next time

Lots of love, cheerio Jim

P.S. (22.6.42) Had a chat with Drafting Officer who says I'll be on draft by September that makes me feel better.



HMAS Canberra, just before sinking in the Battle of Savo Island. 84 crew members were killed, including Captain Frank Getting, 09/08/1942. (Australian War Memorial, P00698.001)

C/o Writers' Rec. Room,
Flinders Naval Depot
26th June, 1942

Dear Mum,

Received your letter at midday and glad to read your news. Before I forget – no Sunday paper arrived this week so I suppose you forgot – don't forget this week will you. In regard to the Writers badge – when you get home I fancy you'll find it mixed up with some old letters in the cardboard box at the bottom of my cupboard. I'll probably need it in a couple of weeks when I buy the suit of one of the chaps who is going for his Commission next week. I've put in time studying for the Leading Writers Exam. But I find today that it's not just a question of telling them when you're ready to do it and will probably have to wait till August to take the exam and it will be at least 6 months after that till I'm promoted. By that time I will surely be at sea.

As anticipated in my last letter my "black" mood had mostly lifted by morning and I'm no worse than usual now. However in spite of buying cod liver oil and malt on Monday I have managed to get a particularly heavy cold which came on in full force last night and naturally makes me rather depressed now. Today I've been taking cod liver and malt, eucalyptus on sugar, finished your red jubes and made inroads on a packet of butter menthol – guess I'll just have to wait for it to pass. May be caused by my cold trip down although the weather here is pretty drastic. Thick fog yesterday which didn't lift till 12.30.

I've been working pretty hard – am doing a ledger on my own while a Petty Officer has 21 days foreign service leave and although harder in some respects, prefer it to the job I'll have to go back to.

One of the lads went on draft on Monday and was re-innoculated and had 3 teeth pulled about 10 hours before he left and as 2 were front ones he looked a frightful mess. Made me glad I'd been to Mitchell to get mine done. Two of the boys were re-innoculated Tuesday and spent Wednesday on their backs. I'm over-due for re-innoculation and will present myself to have it done when I feel fitter than I am now. Will have to be done before I'm drafted so don't want it the day I go. Rumours are rife these days about drafts and general opinion

is that a big number of us will be punched out shortly – but where or what to we can't conjecture. However I'm prepared to go at almost any notice and am confident that I'll be gone by or before September and must wait on pins and needles till my draft is announced. After waiting so long I sure pray that it's a good one.

Just changing into shorts to go down to the gym yesterday afternoon when a very unexpected visitor walked into the dorm looking for me. No less than Johnny Tunbridge, in civvies. (He's the lad I stayed with in Adelaide and you'll remember he was discharged unfit) I thought he must have rejoined, but he's in Melb. on 2 weeks holiday and saw our van in town and having nothing to do wangled a lift down here.

Had a letter from Col Ayres and will meet him next weekend and go out to see the Grand National Hurdle. (Glad I'm not on leave this weekend) Also had a letter from Merle and at her request I posted those suede leather gloves on to her – they were Cyril's originally and she said he needed them. If it's cold at Wagga I'll bet Harden is no picnic.

Got a tin of Robinson's lemon barley crystals in a Comforts Fund parcel months ago and last night I filched ¾ lb sugar and with boiling water made about a quart of syrup and bottled it and it's now in my locker. With water it makes a nice drink – would be better in summer though. Will try some with hot water before I go to "bed" tonight and it should be as good as a hot lemon drink.

Think I'll leave this letter open till tomorrow morning so I can add anything further I think of. By the way – my watch seems O.K. when I leave it in my locker but is on a "go slow strike" when I wear it. Will persevere for a while at any rate.

27.6.42 Just for a break last night I went to the pictures to see "Band Wagon" a fairly bright British picture and Paul Lukas in "Chinese Bungalow" – just a show. When I got back to the dorm. I found the paper had arrived so that's O.K.

Cold has reached the sniffly stage and I'm likely to use numerous hankies today. However it is not as heavy as yesterday and I feel brighter. Just at present it's raining hard and seems to have set in so I suppose I won't get a chance to

wash and the laundry will benefit. I'll have my hands full this afternoon in any case as I have a pile of work in front of me and apart from that must find time to change my filthy hammock for a clean one.

I hope this letter will find you O.K. – forgot the street name although I think it's either "Neil" or "Albury". Give my best regards to Mr and Mrs Cooper and also the Claytons and both families of Martins and Bests.

Cheerio for the present,

Your affec. son
Jim.

Grand National Hurdle, Flemington Racecourse, 1940. (Australian Racing Museum)

C/o Writers Rec. Room,
Flinders Naval Depot.
3rd June, 1942

Dear Mother,

Very pleased to receive your letter last night, though grieved to learn that you also copped a cold. Mine is almost O.K. now and except for an occasional sniffle I'm as good as new. However I'm still taking Malt extract to prevent further colds and also to help build me up somewhat as I'm under my usual weight. Weighed myself stripped the other night and went 10 stone 10.

I wish you'd told me about Gran's birthday and I would have been pleased to send her a congrat. wire for her 80th. Still as active as ever too I suppose. No doubt by now Merle will have arrived in Harden and I hope the train trip won't fatigue her unduly. Too bad about the Sunday papers being burnt but I guess it won't hurt to miss one week, but please don't do it too regularly.

Went round to see the Drafting Officer yesterday re getting transferred to RUSHCUTTER whilst waiting for a draft to sea, but he said that unfortunately he couldn't relieve me at this juncture, and at anyrate I won't have very long to wait, which is all very vague.

On Wednesday night I donned sweater and shorts and went out for a run to help sweat away my cold, and we started on the three mile cross country course and got about a mile and found it mostly under water, so turned back and went for a run round the road and certainly made a fast pace. As you probably know the hard road is much tougher on the legs than turf and yesterday and today my calf muscles have been particularly sore.

A New Entry in civvies, a Motor Mechanic, came down to the Office yesterday to make out his Marriage Allotment, and we were furtively eyeing each other out of the corner of the eye, and then identified each other as Burragorangites. I met him and his wife down there and Bub was down there with his wife and we were with their party at the Burragorang Re-Union and he drove me home. His name is Stan Taylor and you might remember me saying he was a very good pianist. Bub will remember his wife probably, everyone called

her"Momma". Stan said that Mrs. Ponder had been in a car accident and was in Hospital with a broken collar bone. Motor Mechs go in as P.O.'s so I won't see a great deal of him.

Had a letter from Goody at the same time as your letter last night and its the third from her so I'm doing alright. She's still at home so I suppose has plenty of time to write – her first letter was no less than 9 pages.

Surprised to hear there was a registered letter for me the other day, and found inside it 5/- postal note from Randwick Ladies, and it was very handy to buy Malt and tooth paste that I needed right at the time.

When you get home will you have a good look for that old gold Writer's badge of mine as I'm buying the suit of one of the chaps that did his Officers Exam. this week after he comes back from two weeks leave. I think you'll find it among the top letters in my cardboard box in the cupboard. Just enclose it in your next letter – no great hurry for it.

Found that my pinkish pajamas are beginning to fray so stitched on a flannel patch last night, but its certainly not an artistic achievement and must need the woman's touch. No pajamas available from the store at present but they have 6,000 pairs on order, so shall get a pair then. The price is 18/11 and as that would be about 30/- outside, they must be either very good or made from "gold" cloth, that sounds dear doesn't it?

Seems strange heading letters with "Writers' Recreation Room", but that is still the correct way to address my mail, in spite of the fact that our Rec room has been taken over for sleeping accommodation and we have shifted the leather settees and chairs up to our dormitory, so have luxury furnishings now. The sweeper will have a big job now, though.

I go on leave tonight and am very glad I do – think this was the longest fortnight I've ever spent down here. Had a letter from Col Ayres on Wednesday, & he'll wire me today if he can meet me. He is trying to transfer over to the R.A.A.F. and might have to do a medical this week-end. The Grand National Hurdle is on Saturday at Flemington, so I guess I'll be out there with a few bob and also my little camera. Have written to Navy House for a billet again so hope I get nice people.

Must get on with the job now, so cheerio and much love,

Your fond son,
Jim.

Flinders Naval Depot,
Mess No. 57-BM2
8th July, 1942

Dear Mum,

Three letters in the mail tonight – one from you, one from Merle and one from George McGrath dated 1st July so that's fairly fast from Moresby. Don't worry about that gold badge of mine – don't order another, as I only want it for my No. 2 suit and if you can't find the other (for what reason I don't know) I'll just use a red badge. I'm buying the suit of one of the lads who is on leave till Sunday week. He passed for his commission and his appropriation came out today – he is to go to W.A. Only one out of the last course got a ship – the "Westralia".

No doubt you'll have heard from Bub by the time you get this letter and as I haven't a great deal of time I'll just mention it briefly. Bub will be able to read you the details.

There was a downpour when we got to Melb. on Friday night – had tea at Navy House – my cap disappeared but I got it back next morning.

My billet was with Councillor Treacy at Brighton – nice family – Mr and Mrs – eldest daughter Madeleine about 21, twins Eunice and Margaret and 3 sons in Services. He knows of Tom and Wal Digby. They asked me to stay with them future occasions and I certainly will.

Picked up uniform from Rene on Saturday morning. Didn't meet Col. Ayres – he mightn't have come up. Went out to the Grand National at Flemington and saw "Saul" run a magnificent race to win by 20 lengths. I backed "Kootenbeen" and "Winterset" both winners on the place tote, but finished about ten bob down.

Went to a nice dance at Brighton Town Hall that night, only nasty feature was walking "home" in the rain. Spent Sunday afternoon and night at "Powerhouse" and met a lot of old acquaintances.

Stayed at YMCA on a very hard bed, up at 5.30 to catch a train to Frankston

and thence to Depot per taxi – 12 of us into a 7 seater car – 5/- each.

Mr Makin, the Navy Minister was here on Monday and a "dummy" air raid was put on for his benefit. By the way, I forgot to tell Bub in my letter about meeting Stan Taylor down here – did you tell her? Mentioned in my last to you.

Letter from Goody on Monday on Kossie envelope and paper, but that didn't scare me. She does write a fair epistle and is pretty consistent too. Sent a photo to George McGrath of Goody and self at Kossie and in his words, "the filly looks like a smart galloper, while you don't appear to have become any more like Mr Hyde". He sounds more cheerful in the last letter. Oddly enough I wrote to him only last night – at least typed one from work and put in clippings about Saturday's races that should interest him.

Without definite purpose I looked at the parcels list yesterday and was mildly astounded to see 2 packets and 1 parcel for me. Parcel from NST, your packet and piece of wedding cake. The card with the cake cleared up a letter I got on Monday: Return thanks affair from Mr and Mrs Peter Smith. Appears to be Veronica Shipp, an NST girl.

Surprised last night to bump into Petty Officer Abrahams who was Depot Hockey Capt. last year and had only got back the night before from his adventure on the sunken "Vampire". Had my first hit at hockey tonight at his request – very wet and I measured my length in the mud once – may start a Depot team going again.

That a/c would be right for my teeth – I had 5 done – and he's not charging for 1. Jean's a nuisance not knowing my address. That wedding card reached me addressed "Mr Jim Yeomans, Flinders Naval Depot".

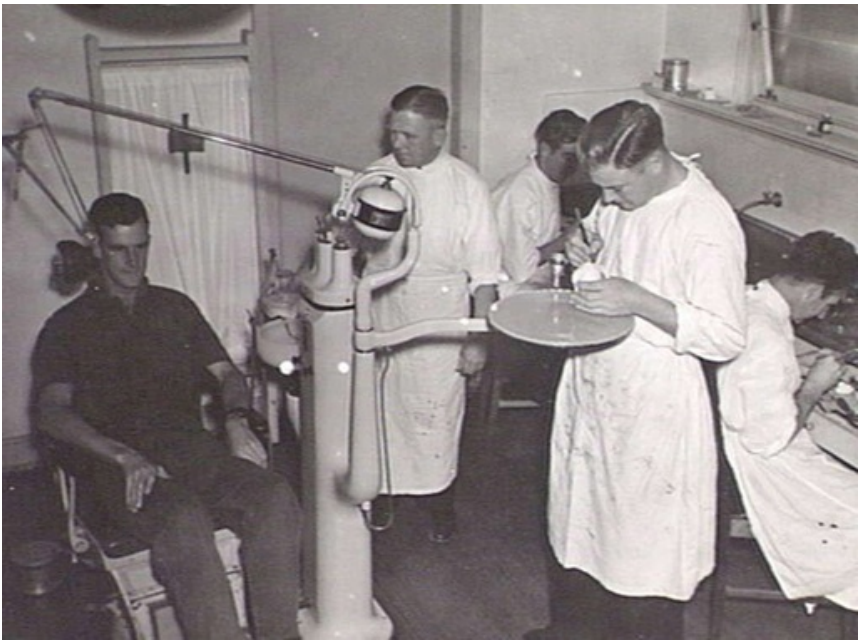
Don't worry about looking for pajamas for me, I'll get some when stocks come in. Glad to hear Betty got spliced O.K. will look forward to a photo. Haven't got paper yet.

Please have another look for any W badge – no hurry but they're scarce.

Excuse this messy effort – I'm tired tonight, but feel O.K.

Much love,
Jim.

P.S. One of the lads doing the course for Officers Commission is deferred, pending result of a "spelling test" he has to do – bad luck if he slips up on that. Merle would be no good. In my letter she battled with "muscles" – finally put "mustles".



Dental Staff and RAN patient in the dental surgery at the depot hospital, 1945. (Australian War Memorial, 122506)

C/o Writers Rec. Room,
Flinders Naval Depot.
16th July, 1942

Dearest Mother,

Received your letter last night, but it was 11.30 p.m. when I got in and was too dark to read then, so put it aside till breakfast time. I'd already had Bub's air mail letter at midday, so knew the big news and had whipped away a telegram to my big sister containing my congratulations. Bub hadn't mentioned the weight, so I had to see your letter to get that information – note that neither of your letters contain any mention as to the child's prospective name, so I trust that so weighty a problem is receiving proper consideration. From your letters I am led to believe that Merle is pretty O.K. and I suppose she feels very pleased now that it is over, and Cyril was begrudged the customary last minute anxiety of the prospective father.

Certainly must have been a blow to Aunty Maude after all this time to receive official information that Perce is missing. Hope he is O.K. and if you get definite information that he is a prisoner, let me know whether I can write to him.

Up to the present, there is a definite ban on travelling Interstate on leave, but as you say, there is a "buzz" that the restriction in that respect is to be lifted although I find that the authorities have heard nothing official – will just have to hope.

As I remarked in my last letter I managed to "wangle" a week-end ashore out of watch, and went once more to my friends the Traceys at Brighton. I sent warning in the shape of a telegram as I had promised. I'm getting a bit shrewd, as I left the train at Glen Huntly, took an electric back to Ormond and caught a bus cross-country to Brighton, with a result that I arrived there before the leave train would have reached town. Took along a big tin of asparagus which we had for tea and which they seemed to relish.

Had a date with a nice WAAF who lives at Caulfield, so I picked her up, in civvies, and we went to a nice cabaret dance at "Cocoanut Grove", a place I

hadn't visited previously. I enjoyed the night, as the girl was an excellent dancer, good company, the place wasn't packed, there was a nice supper and two floor shows for admission of 3/- per head, so that was quite reasonable. The only fault I could make was with the orchestra, which was composed of girls and they didn't seem to have the same "snap" as a man's band.

Had my hair cut by the local barber on Saturday morning and then spent the rest of the morning trying to buy a couple of batteries for my torch, without success. I've asked Goody to get me a couple, and no doubt her Mother will get them sent along for me. Its a dashed nuisance down here without a torch – I came out of the dorm the other night, fell over a sentry, crashed into some sandbags, stumbled over the gutter, and he began to think I'd had one too many, so I hastened away, and after going about 5 minutes found I'd gone the wrong way – wouldn't it?

Again out to Flemington on Saturday afternoon and managed to collect off the first race by toting "Fur Trader" who paid 15/6 for 2nd place. Had no further luck until the second last race when I toted "Sachem" which paid 26/-. Backed "Grantley" the "dream horse" in the Grand National Steeple, but the dream fell. The G.N. Steeple was rather a good race and was a dashed good turn up for our friends the bookies. Very surprised to hear an insistent call of Jim, and found Leo Westhoff, N.S.T.'s Sales Manager trying to attract my attention. He had flown down the night before in connection with business, and was not particularly happy as he was down £18. I finished up winning back what I'd lost the week before so was satisfied.

Took Madeleine Tracey to the dance at Brighton Town Hall again on Saturday night, and as before it was a very good turnout, if a little too crowded.

Just for a change, Sunday was quite a nice day and after breakfasting at about 10. o'clock, I just loafed round the house taking several photos of the twins and also their setter "Duke" and cat "Twinkle". The dog and cat are good pals and I should have some interesting photos of them wrestling and playing together.

After lunch I took Madeleine to play her first game of "squash" and she acquitted herself very well, although she declares it must have cost her a stone weight. I also enjoyed the game, although it wasn't the same competition as a

man would give, I was sweating fairly freely after the half hour's play.

From there we went on to the "Powerhouse" and spent the time till 9.20 dancing and chatting with the "hostesses" there. Also had the nice tea that is provided there – its really an excellent place.

This time I couldn't go back in the taxi and had to catch the lousy leave train. There was a big crowd – possibly some didn't get seats and it was the longest trip in my experience. Took from 10 p.m. till 2 a.m. to get to Depot. We waited almost an hour at Frankston for some unknown reason and the old engine couldn't get up a hill later on and had to haul the train up in two sections. You can imagine how ropable the lads were when we got in, and were roused from our drowsiness to brave the icy cold winds whistling across the pitch black parade ground.

Naturally the next day, the boys outlook on life was a bit jaundiced and all rose coloured spectacles were put away, and there were a good few grumblers. Got a surprise in the afternoon when I was asked to rake up a Rugby team to play the Air Force from Somers. Knew a couple of enthusiasts, and with their help, managed to scrape a team together. Chief Writer "Tug" Wilson was a great help and he played and enjoyed the game immensely. We licked the Blue Orchids and even your son managed to scorch up the wing to score a try. Had to play again the following night – miscellaneous against the ships company team, and they had some big boys, and certainly punished us. Two nights football in a row without training made me pretty stiff and sore.

Got permission to leave the Depot last night and at the invitation of a Petty Officer acquaintance, borrowed a rusty old bike, and rode down to his little house in the bush at Bittern about 4 miles away. I'd met his wife before and also made the acquaintance of his two small sons. Their little house is surrounded by beds of hundreds of jonquils and they look beautiful and have a very strong scent. His wife cooked a beautiful baked dinner, roast beef and vegs. and apple pie and cream. Had to refuse two helpings of apple pie on account of having two"scrans". Played Chinese checkers in front of the fire till about 10.45, had supper and then I pushed off, without a torch, and cycled as fast as I could back to Depot through the icy and black night. Very pleased to find a kind friend had already slung my hammock.

With your letter there was also one from Goody – the bi-weekly screed – she's a darned good correspondent, and she enclosed a photo that I had taken at Powerhouse and sent to her. In my opinion its about the best I've had taken in uniform, although it is marred slightly by the pipe I'm holding in my teeth, in the left side of my mouth. As you know, I can't hold my face right before a camera, and used the pipe to help me. If it had been held at the right side, it would have balanced nicely. Goody thought I might like her to get you an enlargement of it, and if you think you could stand another photo, it might be worth getting done. Bub, Merle and Percy might also like one too. I've asked her to ring you to see if you want one and also the size and have also told her to give them to Jean Earngey to get done at Harringtons, and so you can pay for them then and I'll fix it up with you instead of sending a postal note along to Goody, and it would also facilitate the distribution.

Although I hadn't intended to play Rugby again, "Tug" rang me up yesterday and asked me to turn out for selection with the Navy team to play combined Metropolitan on Saturday. I'm not at all anxious to play in a "serious" match, so only coasted along and kept out of trouble so shouldn't have to worry about being selected. Among the players last night, there were several officers including the C of E chaplain, who is rising 40 but played a good tough game and got stuck right into the thick of it. He and Tug were supporting each other in the scrum and are old shipmates, but many of the lads didn't recognize the gent in dirty old shorts and football boots as the rev. parson and the language in the scrums was colourful if not correct.

14.7.42. Received the Sunday paper last night, but so far have been so busy that I haven't had a chance to unwrap it, but will have pleasure in reading it going down in the train today. By the way last week's paper couldn't have arrived till Friday night, and I didn't see it till Monday. Got my bank book back from Melb. Head Office this week and found the whole 5/1 interest on it.

That just about finishes me up, so till next time, much love,
Jim.

Flinders Naval Depot.
22nd July, 1942

Dear Mum,

Glad to have a letter from you in last night's mail, and was relieved to find that the baby has a passable name. I like the "Raymond" but the James part is too, too common. Glad Merle didn't get her wish for "Paul" – just try it on the tongue and see what you think. Certainly bad luck that its the Railways who are restricting travelling, as the Christening would make a good excuse for a couple of days home. Hope Merle continues to feel well, the baby also, and I think it will benefit Merle and give her something she can really fuss over to her heart's content.

Bad luck about Perce, no news, but you're wrong about Perce not being able to rough it. If he wanted to, he could stick with the hardiest. Remember those Norton Basin days – we used to live on next to nothing, and the exercise we got was pretty terrific.

Think you're wrong about the Traceys being Irish – the twins go to Sunday school – either C of E or Methodist. On Sunday Madeleine went to the Memorial Service at Brighton Meth. Church to Ross Gregory, the Test Cricketer who was recently killed in action with the RAAF.

In regard to my photo – perhaps you have been out when Goody has called you, but by now no doubt she's been in touch. Don't worry about the torch batteries – I thought Goody would be able to get them for me, and think they're on their way.

As you knew, once again I was in Melbourne on leave, and I think that's the only part of the Navy I like – being on leave. Doesn't sound very patriotic, I suppose, but I feel that I'm rotting in this energy sapping hole, and just don't give a tinker's curse what goes on here – my only saving thought is that I MUST get out of here sooner or later – sooner the better.

Went to the Tivoli on Friday night, and it was good fast moving variety, starring George Wallace and Jenny Howard, and was almost respectable.

Saturday morning, although opening up very cold, fined up quite well, and induced me to go into town. However, I had no intention of going to the races at Ascot, as I had bitter memories of my last stay at that course – apparently it was even worse, as the papers called it a record Ascot crowd. After investing 5/- in preserved pineapple, paw-paw, dates and almonds, I decided to go up to the City Baths for a swim – my first for quite some time. A little minor excitement caused by a Yank who couldn't swim getting into bother, so I fished him out. Also bumped a beautiful swimmer up there who turned out to be Percy Oliver, a west Australian who represented Australia in the 1938 Olympic Games and is now in the RAAF. When we were leaving, the Yank and his three cobbers tailed along with us, and the rescued one, "Jerry" insisted on us drinking to his escape. After that there was a round on me for Raymond James – then un-named.

We went with the Yanks up to the Services Club and were duly impressed by the cosy leather furniture and spaciousness etc. Had lunch in their restaurant – the ham and eggs so loved by the Yanks, doughnuts, cake and icecream eaten together with a spoon and lots of coffee. After that we really got started on a binge, and also did a lot of travelling – all by taxi – they don't know what trams are for I don't think. Had dinner at night at the Hotel Australia and then on to a dance. Strangely enough, all the Yanks were inclined to be roly poly and a little pie-eyed, but yours truly and Perce Oliver were quite O.K. They can't have any resistance to it or something. While we were with them we got a lot of inside information about U.S.A. Jerry came from Chicago, Tony from California, Pete from Michigan and Steve from Nevada. The stories about Chicago in Prohibition time were hair raising!

Felt no ill effects on Sunday and bowled into town – 9 miles from Brighton and had another swim – Baths are warm of course.

Arrived at Powerhouse at about 4 o'clock after being farewelled by the Traceys and invited once again to come up next time – that will be a fortnight. Naturally I know quite a few at Powerhouse now and soon find an old friend to talk to – the trouble starts when too many "old friends" arrive together and expect me to talk or dance with them. Surprised to get a hard poke in the ribs and find Sid Woods leering at me. He joined the A.I.F. at the same time as Les Cubitt, but while Les has only been at Bathurst all the time, Sid has been up in Queensland and then 3 weeks in Victoria. Said he expected to be in Sydney next week – hasn't seen his wife for 3 months, and they now have a little baby

boy 6 months old – with two teeth. As usual Sid was sparkling with personality and I had no trouble in introducing him to some good dancers. He said he remembered the first dance I went to – so do I! As you know he was Chief cutter at Fox Movietone and was on a good screw, but is O.K. as he gets his pay made up – lucky hound.

Had already booked in at the YMCA and spent a fair night on the hard mattress, getting up at 5.30, showering and then dashing across to Flinders Street through the rain to catch the train to Frankston and then taxi from there to Depot. Very ropable to see the Navy's advert in the paper calling for young men with "officer like qualities" to enter the Service with view to being made Sub Lieutenants – men required to have character and courage etc etc. That makes me mad – what makes them think there are any eligible men with those qualifications – in short "GUTS" – who are not already in the forces. Any promotion should be made from the ranks – fellows who weren't frightened to join up before the threat of compulsion came over their heads. Bah!!

Found myself getting a cold on Monday and as it was very wintry outside I stayed in the dorm during the "dog watch" playing poker and scooped 10/- – will help me pay for the suit I'm buying off one of the lads. By the way, did you have another look for my gold W badge – it must be in the house somewhere.

Yesterday I got stuck into those "flu" tablets you sent me and also the eumenthol jubes. Bought some more cod liver oil and malt but this morning still feel "lousy" in spite of a very good sweating in a hockey match last night. I played as a "ring in" for the Engineering Department against the Signal School and we won 8 – nil in a good match. I played centre forward and scored 3 goals. After a dash of which I was quite proud, one of the onlookers barracking for the Engineers yelled to me "Good work Stokes" – which is the nick-name for all Stokers, and I just grinned and waved acknowledgment.

Disgusted last night to find that another darned filling has come adrift in one of the top back teeth and so I'll have to make an appointment with the dentist today – only hope he doesn't pull it. If you haven't already paid Mitchell's bill, you might mention that. Must get my re-innoculation soon – have been waiting till I felt fit, but I think I'd probably never get it done in that case. Dreamt last night I got a "crash draft" – that's one with about an hour's notice and had to leave without kit or anything – don't think I'd even mind that.

By the way have you heard from the big gum chewer Pinto lately – I haven't had a peep out of him, but haven't written myself.

That's the lot this time I guess Mum, so don't worry about me, I'm not exactly happy, but doubt if I'll be any happier until I quit this place, when I suppose I'll be even more miserable. However, I like to be on the move, and this irks me and the climate is no help.

Give my regards to all and sundry and tell Merle I'm waiting on a letter from her.

Lots of love,
Jim

Mess 57 - BM2,
Flinders Naval Depot.
29th July, 1942

Dear Mother,

Very pleased to receive a letter from you at midday, and hear that you are still battling along, and doing almost as you please these days. Must be a great feeling not to have any bosses to annoy you. Notice that you made £4.5.0 on a card party with 29 people, and can't imagine how you 1. Made that amount. 2. How you got that number in the joint – however, I'll admit it was a good effort and as long as you enjoyed putting it on, that's O.K.

Since writing to you last week, I have been going through a good deal of physical stress and strain as you'll see as you read on. As I mentioned, the filling in my tooth had come adrift, so I made an appointment with the Dentist and went up the following day to see the gent. He was very doubtful about the tooth and only because of my entreaties consented finally to fill it and not yank it. He said that it was near the nerve, and I guess he was right because he gave me some curry. His drill was frightfully high speed compared to Mr. Mitchell's and I thought he'd go right through my head. I was very relieved when he finally filled it, but for three days after it was very sore – I couldn't chew on it, and couldn't stand either cold or hot fluid, or anything sweet for a couple of days. Gave me so much trouble on Saturday that I was nearly decided to have it out. Appears to be O.K. now and I hope it continues to stay that way.

The same day as my tooth filling, I got a call to go to the Hospital for my re-innoculations, and as I had a cold etc. I wasn't very pleased. The actual needling doesn't worry me, but about 4 hours later the effect hit me, my arm swelled up and I got the shivers. In spite of going to "bed" at 8.30 I couldn't sleep and had a helluva night, because a hammock is a cow of a place to toss and turn. Had a vile head the next day, and a sore throat, so managed to get the day "excused duty" and spent it on our couches dozing. Did have a really good night sleep that night, and felt 100% the following day.

Unfortunately however, on Saturday, I felt a small outbreak on my back, and as I feared, turned out to be a boil. May be a result of the innoc. but I'm

not sure. Anything is liable to happen in this dump. For all this week that boil has been giving me plenty of pain, and any movement causes the skin to ripple to it and make me squirm. Last night in the hammock wasn't very happy, and the chap alongside said I moaned all night, and I quite believe it. The core should be nearly ready to come, and hope to have it out today or tomorrow. Hope its O.K. by the week-end, otherwise it will curtail my fun. Intend buying some tin oxide tablets to take when I get to Melb. so that I won't get the usual crop – as they always come together was about this time last year wasn't it – I REMEMBER!

One of the lads bought me a pair of pajamas when I was laid up "excused duties" last Thursday and they cost 8/7 and are quite alright except for being about 3 sizes too big, but no doubt they will shrink with washing. I have size 2 & they're too big, but one of the little chaps has a pair Size 4 and I think the trousers are as tall as he is, but he's sticking to them & will get them altered. There wasn't much choice apparently.

I bought that suit I mentioned – double breaster & fair condition – just fits me tight when I'm not wearing a sweater. Will take it up to get cleaned this week-end. Had a job picking his "Supply" badge off it, as it was machine sewn. Too bad you couldn't locate my gold badge, but it may turn up sometime.

Last letter I had from Goody was on Friday night, & in it she wanted to know when you'd be home from Harden, so that's why she hasn't rung apparently – I thought she'd assume you were back. I told her about my session with the Yanks, and she was more annoyed about the fact that I had the binge with "Yanks" than that I lost my "Halo". By now she will have rung you, as I told her that you were home when I answered her letter.

Did a big supply of "dobeying" on Saturday afternoon, and as I'm sick of the way the laundry starch my collars too stiff I bought some starch and did my own and got them just as I like them. Stiff enough to be presentable, but easy enough to adjust the tie. If I put a note with mine to the laundry – "semi stiff" – they don't put any starch at all in the darned things. Its quite right to put the collars in the starch when they're wet isn't it – I'm getting pretty accomplished and felt very proud and pleased with my collars – just starched them and ironed them dry. Put most of my dobeing in the drying room and accordingly lost 1 pair socks and 1 pair underpants – that's the second pair of undies I've lost in a

fortnight – most annyin'.

On Sunday afternoon, I had nothing to do, so another chap and I walked over to Somers. It had been raining a lot through the week, so we went out the back and round the "long way", by the road. It must have been about 6 miles and the road made it hard going, so we came back cross country and as expected got bogged half a dozen times, and had to walk through sheets of water and got the shoes and pants in a devil of a mess.

Wrote a joint letter to Bub and Merle on Sunday night and as they'll be together, I'll do all their letters in duplicate for a while, unless either objects.

Saw a friend of mine who is the Leading Supply Assistant in charge of "Comforts" which should only be issued when a rating goes on draft. I persuaded him that I'll be on draft soon at anyrate, and should be given some consideration for my long service in this cold hole, with a result that I got a good plain navy blue hand knitted polo neck sweater, which is goodo to wear off duty.

Went to the pictures on Monday night and saw an excellent programme – my friend Bing Crosby in "Birth of the Blues" – that was a musical feast for me, and Lloyd Nolan in "Buy me that Town" a very good support, so I went to "Bed" feeling very contented.

Suppose you've heard that Ross got a draft to Townsville, just as the bombs are dropping there too - he wasn't very pleased I guess. Suppose you saw from the paper that there were a number of survivors of PERTH, mainly officers, published in the paper. Was Mrs. Chalk's friend among them did you notice?

One of our lads has been making very clever and pretty table centre mats from silk threads, so I thought you might like one, and asked him to do a set of three and I posted these registered mail on Tuesday, and do hope you like them and also that you can use them. If the fluff has gone down at all, it can be brought out in full by placing them in the sun. This lad used to make a set in 8 hours, and I reckon that's good going. Try to overcome the urge to raffle them if you can please Mum!

On Saturday midday the Sunday paper you sent arrived (slow eh?) and also the batteries that Goody sent. Unfortunately they are no good to me, so I had

to send them back to her again, and she's trying to get me new ones. Asked one of the boys to try to get some for me at A.G. Healings on Saturday, but neither they nor anyone else has any in stock, so Goody is my only hope.

Had a letter from George McGrath yesterday, and as usual he hasn't got much to say, but put it quaintly. Says that nothing ever happens up there except air raids – how dull! Did you notice that the"Macdhui"got knocked up there.

Also a letter from Merle last night and she sounds quite cheerful – I was doing a crossword when it arrived – becoming quite a crossword fan – should be educational to do them constantly I think.

One of my original draft from RUSHCUTTER, Supply Assistant Fred Hardaker was discharged "unfit" on Monday - trouble with cists or something. Did feel very sorry for him - he's been either here, or in hospital all the time he's been in the Navy. By the way, I don't want a sleeping bag - could get one in Melbourne "buckshee' if I wanted it.

Much love,
Jim

The bombing of the Motor Vessel (MV) Macdui at Port Moresby. The Japanese attacked the Macdhui on 16 June 1942, and again on 17 June, resulting in an order to abandon ship, June 1942. (Australian War Memorial, P02759.035)

H Ward,
Flinders Naval Hospital
2nd August, 1942

Dearest Mum,

No doubt you have heard from Merle telling that I have the mumps and have been whisked into hospital. For the first 2 days I was in a hammock owing to the extreme overcrowding in this (and every other) ward. On the third morning however, I got down from the hammock to go to the lavatory and managed to faint 3 times before being carried back to my hammock. They cleared a bed for me and that's where I've been since. This ward is only meant for 16 but there are 39 here – 21 in hammocks. Of course some of these are up during the day and they do all the work – serving meals, washing up, cleaning, sweeping and polishing – a lousy system.

My temperature hasn't gone below 99 and has been over so mostly and I've felt pretty punk. Can't eat much, especially as the food is worse than what we get in the Mess and is always revoltingly cold and greasy! If only I could have had it when I was home!

The Sick Berth Attendant in this Ward is a good little chap and works like a beaver more than 12 hours a day – they have a cow of a job and promotion for them is almost non-existent.

Someone from the Mess brought down your 2 letters and 2 papers which I was duly grateful for. Also a letter from Merle which I'll answer later on. Just address mail as usual and I'll probably get it O.K.

Don't worry about me, I'll be O.K.

Mumpily yours,
Jim

P.S. We were issued with 25 ration coupons last week.

H.M.A.S. "Cerberus",
Mess No. 57-BM2
3rd August, 1942

Dearest Mother,

Very pleased to have an extra letter from you and see that you received the table extras I sent. Thought they looked rather nice and might appeal to you, so I'm glad you liked them.

Apparently you had a phone confab with Goody, but you don't say whether you asked her to get photos for Merle or Bub. I warned you that it's the best photo I've yet had taken, and if you're waiting for me to get a studio portrait done, I'm afraid you'll have a long wait.

By now I suppose you'll have heard from Merle that I had a short sojourn in Hospital. On Wednesday, a Doctor decided that my boil would be too painful for sleeping in a hammock and he had me put in a bed on the verandah of "B" Ward. That suited me, despite the fact that I had to go to sleep directly after tea, as there was no light allowed on the verandah. It was a very frosty night and I certainly felt the cold despite 3 blankets, but it didn't worry me much—I rather enjoyed the fresh air. There was a charming Sister in charge of the Ward and she did all she could for me. Forgot to mention that my boil had developed 3 heads.

Unfortunately, beds were much in demand, and with several others, I got kicked out to "G" Ward where I had to sleep in my hammock much to my annoyance and discomfort—one never knows "what next" in the Navy—especially in hospital. I stayed in "G" Ward in various stages of rest, pain, relaxation and discomfort until yesterday and was glad enough to be discharged, although I am still on the "attending" list and have a dressing on the boil much to my annoyance—the mag. sulph. dressing draws strongly and makes the skin round the boil red and sore. Haven't done any exercise for over a fortnight and it's about time I got myself back into condition.

Had a telegram from Col. Ayres who wanted to meet me "up the line" but I had to wire him, also Mrs. Tracey and my W.A.A.F. that I couldn't get out.

Think I'll be able to get up this weekend to make up for it though—couldn't stand being up here a month without a break.

Suppose you heard that the Air Force got Home Leave Passes back, but up to date Navy hasn't been reinstated, but we're hoping—and if we don't get it soon there'll be ructions. I'll try to get home as soon as it comes back into operation. Quite a while now, isn't it?

Also I suppose you heard that we are to get an increase in pay—proper thing too! If and when it comes in I think I'll increase my allotment by that amount. Don't know that it's very cunning to save these days, but as I think I can do without it, I might as well put it away as waste it. Can then always draw on it if need be. If I see it right, I won't need "dough" in any big amount for a long, long time—but one never knows!

By the way, up to the time of writing I haven't collected my Sunday paper—to my disappointment. They never seem to hurry about sending them through.

Just a sidelight—had my "wool" cut today and had an even longer wait than usual—Barber is short staffed owing to losing his men or some of them to the military. Speaking of shortages—sticking plaster is so short in the Hospital that I always had and have a bandage around my middle to keep my dressing on—and it's rather uncomfortable.

Suppose Merle told you that Cyril sent her my letter and vice versa. Had a registered packet today from Goody containing the two torch batteries I wanted—very glad as they're unobtainable.

Haven't heard any more about my draft, but feel pretty confident of getting out within a month. I've certainly waited patiently—it's getting on for 16 months in Depot now.

4.8.42 Saw Dr. this morning and still have to continue dressings.

Your fond son,
Jim

Surgeon Captain Alexander Scott-Mackenzie, Senior Medical Officer of the Depot Hospital, 1945. (Australian War Memorial, 122477)

H Ward,
Flinders Naval Hospital
4th August, 1942

Dearest Mother,

So glad to have a letter from you this morning – one of the boys brought it down from the Mess and I received it while I was humbly and wrathfully doing the washing up for the Ward – over 35 men with two plates each makes a fair wash and as I only got up yesterday I'm still weak, but that's the rotten system.

You've got no idea how much I would have given to be treated at home – all this wasted time and I could have done a lot of useful things at home that I've wanted to do for years – even in bed – and your cooking is 100% on this stuff down here – I'm sick of it.

In the letter I told Merle I had the mumps, I also said to tell you that I had acquired a good gold badge for 2/- – apparently she didn't tell you. If you can and haven't paid a deposit, cancel the one at D.J.'s as I'll have no use for it and please don't feel the other was lost by you, it was probably just my carelessness. However the new one I bought is quite good and better than the old one and is already on my newly acquired suit.

Hadley's Castle Hill place sounds O.K. but they certainly improve the places they take over don't they. May get out to see it when I'm on leave one of these days. Afraid there's no chance of getting sick leave. Sick Leave is only granted after an operation and even then one only goes to a "Convalescent Home" I think.

You mention getting a notice from Navy Office re the allotment and that will be the increase of 10/- I made. Should be £2.10 per fortnight as from today – I won't miss the 10/- but it will mount up a bit. I told you we got 25 coupons each, and I'll have a look at underclothes when I'm next "up the line". Don't suppose 25 will go far.

Get some funny companions in misfortune here – one is so fat in the face, it's impossible to tell which is mumps and which just natural face. Another one did 3 weeks training when he first came, and since then has had measles,

bronchitis, a spell at a Convalescent Home and now the mumps, so he hasn't seen much life in the Service but isn't worried.

Had my first shave Tuesday and there was certainly a growth – I looked very much like a "bushwacker". Got up yesterday for the first time and gave my bed up to a sicker man, had to sling a hammock and I was terribly tired last night.

Had a letter from Mrs. Tracey on Wednesday expressing her sorrow etc. She didn't get my letter till Saturday morning and the wire I gave one of the boys to send, apparently wasn't dispatched and they waited till 7 p.m. for me to arrive.

The idea of spending yet another week-end in Depot, especially in Hospital, gives me the horrors! We've got to work too darn hard at anyrate.

I appear to be pretty right now, but my teeth and gums seem to have been affected and the Doctor said it was due to my high temperatures. I can't stand anything sugary in my mouth, like chocolate, sweets, jam etc. or it sends an ache right through my teeth that almost knocks my skull off. He says it will be O.K. later on and I sure hope so. Forgot to tell you that I had a small boil on the back near the old one, but it's nearly O.K. now and wasn't painful.

I'm wondering what plans are in store for me in the way of a draft, but don't think it will be this month and I should get home in about 3 weeks. Wouldn't try next week, as the trip would knock me up too much. Weather is exceptionally vile and I wish I was back in bed.

That's about the lot Mum, except to wish I was home.

Keep smiling and the old chin up

Much love,
Jim

P.S. Hope you can fix up my verandah window O.K!

C/o Writers Rec. Room,
F.N.D.
10th August, 1942

Dear Mum,

Received my mail at lunchtime today – that being the first opportunity I had to get to the dorm. after being "up the line". By the way, just this minute received a letter from Bub. Wish I'd decided to type your letter – that typewriter has made me lazy for hand-writing – I can think faster and express myself more naturally in type, but I shall battle on.

Not very pleased to hear that you have another cold – you'd better be O.K. by the week-end as I have great hopes of getting home for a day or two. Too bad about Aunty Maude – hope she doesn't get become despondent – in the meantime we can only hope and pray for Perce. I've got a lot of confidence still.

Bubs says that Ross just had his draft cancelled in time so he was damned lucky!

As I had hoped, I managed to scrape some week-end leave "out of watch" by means best know to myself. Making good connections between train and bus I arrived at the Tracey residence at 6 p.m. and got my usual welcome reception, had tea there and then the twins and I (and a dictionary) got a crossword puzzle out before I sallied forth. I had a date with a W.A.A.F., but she rang to say that she was "onboard" for the week-end and had to break the date. So I went out alone and finished up at "Palm Grove". It was "American Night" and all the Yanks were jitterbugging so I had a crack at it myself and enjoyed myself immensely. Luckily I didn't stay till the end and just got in before the rain began to pelt.

Rang Merle's late employer "Dan" on Saturday morning and got the address of his nearest dry cleaning agency and dumped my newly acquired uniform there – should look very choice when it's done. Went in by train and after buying up a quantity of sultanas, dates and nuts I met Dan and had a chat with him before going up to the Americans' Club for lunch. It's worked on the cafeteria style and I just picked up what I fancied which was as follows:-

Ham-two eggs- lettuce-radishes and shallots, hot apple pie-chocolate ice-cream with chocolate sauce, cup of coffee and an apple to finish up – cost just 1/5 and I was full as a tick when I got up, but I DID enjoy it (Gosh I'm tired!)

After I finished my repast I heard the sound of piano playing and exercised my voice with a couple of others round the piano which was played by one of the Yanks. Yanks by the way are scarcer in Melb. just at present. Noticed a couple of long handled racquets there and was told they were badminton and not squash racquets as I thought. Finished up playing my first game of badminton which is very little different to the old shuttlecock we played at the Club. Had intended going skating but finished up playing the piano and singing and also playing table tennis. The Yanks are certainly well looked after – they have lots of facilities that I'll tell you about when I get home.

"Home" to the Tracey's for dinner and after shower and shave went round to the dance at Brighton Town Hall. Had my usual good time – never missing a dance. A young sailor pulled me up and said he knew me – that he was Tom Worrall's cousin. I can remember his face as a young brat that used to dash round Bronte Beach.

Just for a change there was a little sun on Sunday morning and after being thoroughly spoiled by Mr Tracey bringing me a cup of tea in bed and read till 10 a.m. when I struggled out and had breakfast. Sat in the sun and read, interrupted only by the dog and one of the twins till the sun went in behind the rain clouds.

After dinner Madeleine and I went down to St. Kilda for our game of Squash before going on to Powerhouse. Had a few dances and chatted with the lasses I know until they started a sing song. They had an excellent pianiste and called for volunteers to sing. A corporal represented the Army by singing "Road to Mandalay" a corporal represented the RAAF by singing "I'm stepping out with a Memory". The Navy was a bit backward and finally a seaman and I sang "Stardust" as a duet – wouldn't it slay you? The pianiste's husband called for her and I got pushed into the job and did what I could till they started the dance records again. I got quite a good "hand" for my effort and was surprised to see Sid Woods grinning at me. He has been home for 6 days and much to his disappointment was sent back to Melb. He is supposed to be attached to the film section, but is doing practically nothing and as he is living "out", he

is very lonely.

We had tea together at Powerhouse and had a good yarn and I introduced him to several I knew. Am supposed to meet him next week-end, but now hope to be in Sydney. Met a beautiful girl there who was as close to perfect as I've yet seen and even had my tastes in music and was a good dancer. Unfortunately however she wore a sparkles on the 3rd finger left hand. Just too late!

Stayed Sunday night with the Traceys as one of the lads had offered to pick me up in his car and drive me to Ormonde Station where I could catch the train to Frankston. Although I hadn't asked her and had no intention, Mrs Tracey got up at 6 a.m. and prepared a little breakfast for me before I left. The lad duly picked me up and I caught the train O.K. and then we went on from Frankston per taxi arriving at Depot by 8 a.m. – much preferable to the Sunday night train.

Yesterday morning I heard for the first time that our Home Leave Passes have been re-instated and immediately put in a request to see Commander for 4 days leave and as it is initialled by my Departments' Officer and signed by Divisional Officer I should have a good chance – especially as I believe my draft date is just about fixed as Sept. 2nd.

Did a fortnight's "dobeying" in the dog watch last night – 7 prs socks etc – never thought I'd finish, so there won't be much to wash when I come home. If I discover any mending I'll bring that – probably a few socks – Will write Mrs Tracey that I can't get down and will ask her if she could pick up my uniform. It's the twins birthday Sunday, so I'll send something.

Have to see Commander at 1.15 p.m. and if I get the leave, I'll let Bubs know when I write to her tonight.

By the way, if Goody meets my train, I suppose it will be O.K. to ask her to lunch if she would like to come.

I'm crossing my fingers and hoping for the best –

Be seeing you I hope,

Your fond son

Jim

P.S. Paper arrived last week on Wednesday night!

Sid Woods said that Fred Coonan was made a Corporal in the Army but was told he wasn't strict enough on the boys, and took the alternative of handing back his stripes. Typical of Coonan!

American servicemen marching past crowds on the streets of Melbourne, 1943-44. (State Library of Victoria, H2000.200/1116)

Mess 57 - BM2,
F.N.D.
19th August, 1942

Dear Mother,

I suppose you went home on Monday night wondering how I managed to make out. As you saw, some coot tripped me and sent me sprawling on the platform and by the time I picked myself up, the train was really moving, and I had no time to wave goodbye or kiss my foot, and swearing profusely I hurled myself through the nearest window, hoping that my feet hanging out wouldn't knock anyone or anything. Finished up in a heap on the floor but at least I made it. My overcoat was covered in dirt and there were a couple of little tears or burns from my contact with the ground and I have since had them mended for 3/-. Luckily I didn't lose anything from my pockets as I had wallet, keys, and fountain pen etc. in the o/coat pockets. Another chap who followed my example didn't have such luck, as he went on straight through the glass partition of the compartment in front of the window, and cut his eye very badly, and just before we got to Liverpool they decided they couldn't stop the bleeding and pulled the communication cord to tell the driver to stop and put him off at Liverpool to get the cut stitched. Our compartment was the nearest to the Air brake outlet vent, and when the cord was pulled gave out a terrific screech and nearly broke our ear drums – its definitely one of the most piercing noises I've ever heard. We put this chap, an airman, off at Liverpool with his bags and continued on – noticed Oss Owers running round like a mad dog but didn't bother to speak to him.

Had a fair night as judged by railway travelling and we hit Albury at 7 a.m. – had breakfast there and left at about 8.15. Train was very crowded and many had to stand. A mob of soldiers tried to pinch our reserved seats and we had a bit of bother getting them out. There was a buffet car on the train so I had something to eat there as we didn't arrive at Spencer Street till 2 o'clock.

As soon as I got in, I rang Mrs. Tracey and then went looking for an invisible mending place. They couldn't mend it "invisibly" while I waited, but made a fair job of darning it with threads from the coat itself – 3/- for the job staggered me though.

Went out to Brighton and picked up my suit and it looks very good, but stinks of cleaning spirit – suppose that will go when its hung out for a while – only wish I had that gold badge so I could wear it as an alternative No. 1 suit. Certainly a mystery! Had a cup of coffee with Mrs. Tracey and then took the bus to Ormonde Station. By the way the twins got my telegram and were very pleased.

Caught an electric train to Frankston and then picked up the Crib Point train at about 6 o'clock. On the train was an Air Force chap, John Kidd, who was in my class during the "Mr. Stuckey period".

By the way, noticed all the way through Victoria that there are great lakes of water everywhere, so think it must have been really raining over the week-end.

Had the long walk from the station to the depot and that case of mine was like lead and my arm was just about pulled out when I struggled into the dorm. Found letters waiting for me – one from Merle written on the 12th – surely she knew I was coming home. One was from George McGrath, so I'll have a good reply for him. He says he was right by when the Macdhui got hit, and he said they hit it with everything. Said they censored my reference about Pinto, and said he was pleased about Merle's news.

Seems to me that Mr. Goodwin was right – all drafts have been stopped so it looks like it, although nothing official yet.

Must get on with the work, so till next time, lots of love,

Your fond son,
Jim

Mess 57 - BM2,
F.N.D.
23rd August, 1942.

Dear Mum,

Received your letter on Friday night and hope by this time you are in a more cheerful frame of mind. Not that I blame you but I'm afraid we'll have to accustom ourselves more or less to hearing bad news about our friends in the forces. It was certainly bad luck that Jim Kidd went, as the proportion of fatal casualties was only moderate. I wrote to Celie although its a very delicate subject and I made it short as possible under the circumstances. Considering the number of men I knew on the Canny, there were very few of their names on the casualty list. From a general view, the Engine Room Branch seem to have lost the most. The only A/C staff rating mentioned was Leading Writer O'Brien "wounded". The RAAF Detachment must have had a shell burst right amongst them as about 7 of the 8 are on the list. The other lucky one would be Pinto's pal Ronny Farmilow – once again Pinto was lucky. He tossed with Corporal Croft to see who would get the Canny, and I noticed Croft was killed. You probably read that the Gunnery Officer, Lieut. Commander Hole was killed – he was the one I told you was down here and used to drown himself in scent & smell like a flapper & talked with a huge "plum" in his neck. *(We nicknamed him "GERTIE")*

In some ways I suppose that from your point of view it was lucky that I didn't go with Jimmy Smith the Chief Wtr. in January, but if I'd got out with a whole skin it would have been a marvellous experience & probably my seatime for the duration would be finished & I'd be quite satisfied.

Quite fine on Wednesday night, so I unobtrusively queued up with the New Entries for Hockey competition game, got myself in a team and as no-one seemed to be boss, I started to give orders & automatically became Captain. (I don't think I was ever meant to take too many orders - I like to dish them out & organize things) I got my team in some order and we had quite a good game. One of the other Writers came out with me too, and he was in my team and was a pillar of strength amongst the backs.

Pay day Thursday and I was pretty much flat out all day - there's rarely time to spare and I didn't get a breather till 4.30. Played poker after supper and much to my disgust, couldn't go right and lost about 10/-. However, the poker school here doesn't owe me anything - I keep above it.

Just after lunch on Friday, I felt very drowsy, and into the bargain, had a splitting head and a dull stomach ache. Took an APC without any benefit. Feeling that way I couldn't go out for any exercise and played poker instead, winning back most of the previous night's losses. After supper, I didn't feel much better but decided to go to the pictures to put in time and for the third time saw Walt Disney's "Reluctant Dragon" and "The Saint at Palm Springs" for the second time – however both of them are pretty good & I enjoyed them. Letters from you and Bub when I got up to the dorm.

Actually speaking, Saturday was a horrible day, but very good for getting washing dry. It was comparatively sunny, but there was a terrific wind blowing. In spite of this inducement to wash, I didn't feel up to it, and straight after lunch which I scarcely touched (fruit salad too) I slung the old hammock and got a couple of hours sleep, waking at about 5 p.m. feeling no better at all. Only pecked at my supper and got into the hammock early after taking 3 aspirins. Slept pretty well and woke without the headache, but fully realizing that I'm by no means perfect - slight lightheaded, but glad enough to be rid of the splitting head. By the way, all day yesterday & even now my throat was also sore, so hope I'm not contracting the mumps. Have been laying into those "Flu pills" and the eumenthol jubes you sent me.

Don't know what the trouble is, but I bet a lot could be traced to our bad accommodation, as there are about 40 men in a room about 33'x33'x12', and with the blackout restrictions, the ventilation is simply non-existent and the atmosphere gets very "thick". Only hope I don't have to spend another Summer here. At least the cold does check the spread of a lot of germs etc.

Made a resolution last night that if I felt O.K. I'd go to early Communion, so rose a bit earlier than usual for Sunday and went down to our Drill Hall cum Theatre cum Church. Apparently our Chaplain was indisposed as the Air Force Padre from Somers was driven across to conduct the service. Only about 20 attended – one officer, the bearded First Lieutenant, 2 Midshipmen (one acted as altar boy), 3 in square rig like myself, and the rest seamen. Quite

a good short service. I wore my newly acquired uniform for the first time since I've had it cleaned and it looked quite smart, and don't think it will need any alterations yet.

Believe the poor writers get some more extra work to do next week - organizing the issue of Ration books - 25 coupons each for Officers and men, and 45 for the WRANS and the nurses. The week after that we have to alter all the rates of pay and allotments as the rise has officially been approved to date from 7th August.

Seems to be quite a nice day, so if I still feel O.K. this afternoon, I'll make an attempt on my "dobeying".

Just about runs me out, so cheerio till next time,

Much love, your fond son,
Jim

P.S. Had a parcel from the Randwick Ladies through the week.

Mess 57 - BM2,
F.N.D.
11th September, 1942.

Dear Mother,

This will have to be rather short as I'm hoping to catch the 11.40 train up to Melbourne this morning, and I've a lot of work that must be done before I leave. By the way, our Monday morning return by taxi has been stopped on account of the lads arriving 7 minutes late one morning. The gent mainly responsible for the stoppage was the swine I pointed out to you coming in the tram when returning from leave last time.

If you've seen anything from Bub or Merle this week you'll know that I was released from Hospital on Monday. I should have stayed "in quarantine" for another couple of days, but the "work" we had to do round the Ward was too much for me, and I pressed the Doctor to allow me to return to "duty". There has been work galore this week owing to numerous reasons as well as my absence of course, and there has been a sale of 14 kits so far this week and that means a lot of extra work for me. Yesterday I bought two extremely dirty singlets for 1/-, and after washing them roughly, discovered they were size 14½& I take 15. They might be O.K. but if I find they're too uncomfortable, I'll soon find a ready market for them as they are better quality than the shirts being sold in "slops" now.

Just by way of miracle, the weather on Tues, Wed., and Thurs. was really beautiful although I can't say the same of today. I've been out playing hockey after work and played a really hard game last night and enjoyed it too, so I must be feeling pretty well. There has been some mucking about with the hot water system this week and twice I have had COLD showers, and I do mean COLD!

On Monday night, after being cooped up for two weeks I craved entertainment and went to the Depot pictures, and waited 1¼hours to see "Lives of Bengal Lancers" (Gary Cooper) and a popular coloured "Popeye". Last time I saw "Bengal Lancers" was with Perce Curvey I think, about 4 years ago.

Received the Sunday paper on Wednesday night, but have been so busy

since that I've only had time to glance through it, but will read it going up in the train today. Intend to call in and see about getting some ultra-violet ray treatment this afternoon providing the price is reasonable, and that should do a lot to tone me up and set me properly on my feet again.

With your letter last night, there was also one from the old mate Pinto with Navy marking all over it. He couldn't say much – just observed that he had been in the Solomons fight, and noted that my draft had been sunk, and decided that I would probably be at F.N.D. for the duration now. I think even Pinto saw his share of action this time, and he would be content to lead a quiet life for a little while. He asked to have his best regards forwarded to your goodself. I'll drop him a line on Monday, and bring him up to date with my news and tell him how wrong he is about me staying here for ever.

As you will have heard, there is to be a new "Canberra" very shortly, but at present nobody seems to know the whereabouts of the "Shropshire" or when and where it will be manned by our crew. It seems to me that Jimmy Smith will go to it as Chief Writer and providing its soon, I should have a good chance for selection. One of the Writers goes on draft today to a remote spot in East Africa and t hat leaves me as Senior Writer except for a Writer who will be in Hospital for another three weeks, and there is a big possibility that I'll be gone before he comes out. I don't know where I'm likely to go, but am hoping for a Sea-going ship. If no draft comes out in the meantime, I'll try to get week-end leave home in a fortnight, but if I do get a draft, I hope to get enough notice so that I'll be able to get home for a couple of days. Pinto says that it looks as if I should have taken the Commission as Pay. Sub. Lieut. while it was offering, but after listening to a couple of Officer candidates talk in the Hospital Ward, I don't think I could stand to much of the la-te-da talk of the Wardroom - would drive me nuts!

After I've done my sea-time, I might re-consider, but that's a long time ahead. By the way, in case I don't manage to get home (which I don't aniticipate of course) I hope you have a copy of that little "Code" I typed out for you some time back - if you can't find it, let me know, and I'll send over a fresh one.[5]

Glad to note that you were able to help Celie get back to normal, but as

[5]This "code" refers to a list of salutations that reveal where in the world Jim is, reproduced at the beginning of the next chapter.

you say, she's pretty level headed and should recover quicker than most. Had a parcel of dried fruit from Bub & Merle earlier in the week,and believe there is a parcel waiting at the Parcels Office from N.S.T.

Will look around for some Pelaco underpants, (linen) today, and it means surrendering 7 coupons each I think - will get two pairs.

Glad to hear that at last you got the plumbing done, & hope you can get the window on my verandah repaired in good style.

Will give you an account of my week-end in Melb. when I write next Monday or Tuesday. Am spending a bit of spare time studying for Leading Writer's exam, that comes off this month, but even if I pass, it will be a long time before I'm "made" - have to wait on "Seniority" of course.

Cheerio till next time, your affectionate son,
Jim

P.S. Am wearing newly acquired uniform this week-end. Being freshly cleaned & pressed it looks quite good.

Mess 57 - BM2,
Flinders Naval Depot
15th September, 1942.

Dearest Mother,

As promised in my last Thursday's letter, I am about to discourse upon my doings "up the line" on the week-end. Owing to my good work on Thursday night, I had my job reasonably cleared up on Friday morning, and thus my Officer in charge consented to me catching the 11.40 train from Crib Point. Arrived in town at 1.30, just in time to miss the RAAF march - thank Lord. Went straight to a physical culture establishment, and had about 10 minutes ultra violet ray treatment on the chest and back for the sum of 5/- and think it was beneficial - however, in my mind, the dollar goes more to experience than actual benefit. Felt the result of it about 6 hours later, - like mild sun-burn, and the skin feels hot, like after a day on the beach. Didn't burn me as the chap expected, because in spite of being fair, the sun and I aren't exactly total strangers.

Put in the afternoon shopping, and it seems that in these days, shopping isn't the easiest occupation. My purchases were a new nail clipper at 1/3 - my old ones (a gift from Mrs. Chalk, Xmas 1938) are now blunt, and are very useful. At Myers, I spent 9/- and 14 coupons on two pairs of linen Pelaco underpants, leaving me 11 coupons for the rest of the year. Goody's birthday on Thursday, so took a chance and bought "Palgraves Selections of English Verse" containing many well-known poems by Byron, Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth etc., and is nicely bound, so hope her tastes run that way. Became quite wrapped up just through scanning it, and wouldn't mind a copy myself. Forwarded it on to Goody on Monday, and also sent singlets for Lofty and tooth-brushes for Merle per registered mail to Bubs.

After my shopping was over, I whizzed out to Brighton per bus and was welcomed by Mrs. Tracey who expressed surprise at seeing me so early. I gained immediate favour by noticing new Feltex floor covering and re-covered lounge and chairs. Partook of a good tea and waited for a WAAF friend to ring me regarding arrangements for the night. She had made plans to go to the Air Force Ball held by Laverton RAAF Station at "Rainbow Club" and I met her

and friends at 9 p.m. at Prahran. Friends turned out to be 3 other WAAF's and 2 AIF Captains and a Flight Lieutenant. Not being versed in Naval ranks, my white cap -cum-white collar and tie rig suitably impressed them, and they accepted me as an equal, and I was quite up to them. Imagine my surprise when I found the cloakroom "girl" to be no other than Merle's ex-landlady Mrs. Osborne. She seemed a little embarrassed at seeing me, and spun a fairy tale to cover her seeming "queer" status.

With a 6 piece orch. to dispense music, it wasn't a bad turnout and I suppose 70% of dancers were either RAAF or WAAAF's giving their evening dresses an airing. Your son Jim was the only member of the Senior Service present, and gained certain glamour from that fact. Took the girl into town after it was over, and shortened time out of bed, by catching a taxi to Brighton - 8/- fare.

Encouraged by your advice, the beating rain and Mrs. Tracey's command, I stayed in bed till 11 a.m. - breakfast being served at 9.30 by the twins - what a life! Read a book on lives of Australian bushrangers till lunch, and must admit complete ignorance of the crimes of the Kelly gang until reading this book.

For the first time in many months went ice-skating - patronising St. Moritz in St. Kilda. Surprised myself by gaining balance and control at the outset, and was at ease all the afternoon even going backwards without any trouble. As usual met an acquaintance - this time a Bronte Swimming Club member who's surname I don't know. He is RAAF and was an escapee from Singapore and Java and we had quite a yarn.

Felt a little tired after my efforts on the ice, and really did enjoy my bath before supper. Trotted along to the Brighton Town Hall to their dance, and renewed many acquaintances and had a fair night - the girls are charming, but the band of women CAN'T play good dance music. Pinto's friend Mr. Orr, is the new Mayor of Brighton & I had hopes of making his acquaintance and giving him a resume of Pinto's doings, but unfortunately, he wasn't in attendance. Speaking of Councillors - Mr. Tracey was recently in Sydney for a week - stayed at Hotel Australia, and mentioned meeting "a friend of Uncle's - Mr. Waterhouse" and no doubt he gave me a wrap up, and it will eventually get to Tom's ears.

On Sunday morning, once again adjured by Mr. and Mrs. Tracey, I furrowed the mattress until 11 a.m. again. The twins once again acted as waitresses. They went right out of their way to torment me, and in a couple of scraps I was badly clawed by their sharp finger nails, and really couldn't do much about it without being brutal, until I discovered how ticklish they are, and had the upper hand from then onwards.

Killed time till lunch by reading "Grey Gladiator" - glamourized (but fairly correct) account of the doings of H.M.A.S "SYDNEY."

Packed my bag after lunch, and at about 3.30, having thanked the Traceys warmly, I departed for the inevitable Powerhouse. Knowing plenty of girls, I had an afternoon and night of dancing and chattering. After tea, noticed an AIF chap eyeing me, so I met him half way and introduced myself, and as I expected, he turned out to be Fred Perry of Bondi Surf Club, and once for a short while, 2nd Waverley Scout Troop. He also used to work with Jack Rhodes and Les. Cubitt from our club. I introduced him fairly widely as it was his first experience of Melbourne. He told me that Sid Wood was at his camp filming, and he recommended Fred to Powerhouse.

Had to leave at 9.20 to catch the train back, as the Monday morning taxi racket has been wiped. Got a bit of sleep coming up, but felt pretty rotten, when we de-trained at F.N.D.

Letters from Bub and George McGrath awaiting me in the Mess. Pleased to have a fairly comprehensive parcel from New Systems on Monday, and I wrote a note to the Secretary, Comforts Fund last night, to express my appreciation - its worth the 1d. stamp & the little effort to keep in good.

Raining yesterday afternoon making outdoor sport imposs. so I spent a pleasurable hour in the Seamen's Recreation Room strumming their piano. Weather since Friday has been absolutely foul.

Guess that's the lot Mater, so till next time, cheerio and lots of love from your affectionate son,

Jim

Mess 57 - BM2,
Flinders Naval Depot
18th September, 1942.

Dearest Mother,

Very happy to receive another letter from you at midday yesterday and read the fresh news. Mrs. Newsway and daughter are a funny pair, but both really good-hearted, and the idea of a "wedding photo" for me tickles me immensely, so if and when I get up I'll have to make a point of calling in and seeing how things are. Funny thing that in Pinto's letter he mentioned the Surf Club putting £550 into War Loan - he saw it in "Surf" magazine.

Glad to hear of Mr. and Mrs. Marris arriving in such an unexpected fashion, but that's definitely the way to go any place these days - just think how the idea of flying the Tasman would have rocked us about 5 years ago. Only hope I can manage to get home next week-end, as I'm very much looking forward to seeing them both. Don't forget to give them my best regards when you next see them if they haven't moved out to "61".

The matter of leave next week-end isn't yet settled and I won't be able to tell you till next week. I think the biggest trouble is the Railways, as passages are difficult to get - however, I will do my best and also hope for the best and let you know at the earliest possible.

Actually its only Tuesday night since I last wrote, so not much has transpired since then. The weather has been very wintery following our three days of "Spring" last week, and we have had fires at the office once more. Have been very pleased to add to my diet at tea each night, a cup of Marmite, out of the pot I received from New Systems, and with a little salt it makes a very enjoyable drink, and the tea is really hardly worth drinking.

Going through some forms yesterday and I came across the name of young Bill Brownjohn, one of the Surf Club's juniors, & he was the youngest member of the Bronze Squad I put through to gain my Instructors Certificate. I immediately put the wheels into action to contact him, and had a chat with him after work yesterday afternoon. It made my heart bleed to see that he's come in as a

Steward, but unfortunately couldn't measure up to the eyesight for a Seaman, and they talked him into the Steward racket. He's only been here since last Wednesday and has been trying hard to transfer to another branch but won't be allowed. At present he is doing the rookie course and isn't very happy about it, but looks quite well in spite of it. He tells me that he talked one of the other Juniors into going down to the Navy to enlist, and also he says Fred Coonan went down to the Recruiting Office too - don't know what Branch, but I'd love to see Fred in "round rig" (i.e. Seaman). Either Fred would break the Navy, or he will be spending most of his time in cells.

Weather has been too bad to allow any outdoor sport this week, and as the Navy is supposed to play Melbourne "up the line" tomorrow afternoon, I'm wondering how they will select the team. Possibly may be able to get in a practice game this afternoon, and hope I make the team, as it will mean a break up the line to play, even though we do have to return tomorrow night.

May patronise the pictures tonight, as a good show "Suspicion" is on - as it is still showing at the main Melbourne Theatre, there's sure to be a big crowd seeking admittance, so I'll have to be on the mark by 6.20 to have a chance of getting in.

I have at least three weeks "dobeying" to do over the week-end and am not looking forward to it very much, but guess it will have to be done on Sunday, if I play hockey tomorrow. By the way, did I tell you I bought two 14½ shirts at a sale of Deserters kit for 2/-. Its a size too small for me, but O.K. to wear up here, and doesn't inconvenience me as yet - hot weather may make it a trifle uncomfortable though. Shirts being sold in "slops" are very rough weave now, and not nearly as good as my original issue.

That's the lot, Mum, so cheerio, and I'll be seeing you –
Jim

P.S. Suppose by now you have got the Naval Allotment book back O.K.

Mess 57 - BM2,
F. N. D.
22nd September, 1942.

Dearest Mother,

Won't make this very long, as I'll be able to tell you any news this week-end. Saw the Commander today, and as my request for leave **was** approved and recommended by no less than three Warrant Writers, he asked me no question and just said "Granted – leave from a.m. Friday to p.m. Tuesday." I am going to see my boss tomorrow or Thursday morning if my work is up to date, and spring it on him to sign a chit for me to leave at 4 o'clock on Thursday after work, and with a bit of luck I'll get the "Natives Bus" to Frankston and train from there, and should just catch the Sydney train. Of course that is all conjecture, but I have strong hopes, and if it comes off, it means I will be in Sydney at midday on Friday, thereby gaining me an extra day at home. If it comes off O.K. I'll wire you from Albury. No wire, and you'll know I'll be home on Saturday.

By the way, I competed my spool of film and sent it to "Kookaburra Snapshots," so if you happen to be up by the Junction please call in and pick up the results. I finished it at the hockey match on Saturday – haven't got time to tell you all about it, but I wrote Bubs a long letter, and she'll be able to tell you all about it.

Have been down at work tonight studying for the Leading Writers' Exam, which is due to come off shortly. Of course, the mere fact of my passing, if I do, won't mean that I'll straight away become a Leading Writer – will take about 12 months before my turn comes up I guess. However, it will be something to get it off my chest.

Met another acquaintance yesterday – Harry Chadwick who was at Clevo with me, and also is a member of North Bondi Club and was a rival of mine as a Junior. He has just come in as an Engine Room Artificer.

By the way am completing this letter on Wednesday morning – been blowing a gale, and we had a fair amount of hail about breakfast time. No letters at all for me last night – haven't had any this week – must be something wrong I

reckon.

That'll do for now, Mum, and I'll be seeing you perhaps Friday, otherwise Saturday. Pick where you'd like to go if I get home on Friday night.

'Bye for now,

Your loving son,
Jim

Mess 57 - BM2,
Flinders Naval Depot.
30 September, 1942.

Dearest Mother,

Just a short note to let you know that I arrived O.K., but only just - as you'll learn as you read on. The trip down was by no means comfortable with 8 in our compartment, but in addition to the books Bubs provided I had a nice girl next to me to talk with. She turned out to be the daughter of the officer whom you noticed on the platform, and he came down by the Limited - about an hour later. Her father is a Commissioned Ordnance officer meaning that he came from the ranks and so she knew a thing or two about the Navy - her father having been in the Service for about 20 years. They went to Melbourne on the "Spirit" and I followed on a slow train that arrived about 2 hours later than it.

Should really have slept on the Victorian train, but suppose I was scared I'd miss something. Once again a full compartment, but we got on pretty well together. Train arrived at Melbourne at about 2 O'clock - luckily there was a buffet car attached.

Went to the YMCA where I had a swim in the 25 yards pool and a hot shower, and felt a bit better. Went out to the Tracey's place at Brighton, and gave Mrs. Tracey the photos of the twins and the dog, and she and the twins were very pleased. Caught a bus from there to Ormonde station, but missed the train to Frankston, and 10 minutes later the Crib Point train roared through without stopping. The station master rang control to see if he'd be allowed to stop it, but they wouldn't allow him. I caught a train from there to Moorabin, a few stations on, which was as far as this one went, and then went on to the main road for some hitch hiking. An old lady driving a Pontiac took me as far as Chelsea, and then I got a producer driven truck loaded with boxes as far as Summerville. Just got there as the Crib Point "express" puffed out - was I mortified?

After a couple of minutes got an old 1925 Buick, which took me to the next station - "Tyabb" - but the train had gone. Traffic very infrequent I started

to walk - about 12 miles to Depot. I got to within ½ mile of Hastings, having walked about 5 miles with my heavy bag when a utility picked me up and took me to Hastings. That walk was murder - the case was heavy and the mosquitoes gave me Hell. Just looking round Hastings for a car to hire, when one of the Depot staff cars whizzed up, and I went as far as the gates in that (he dumped me there, as they aren't supposed to drive us) and I walked the rest of the way. Got my card from the Police Office and no questions asked about being over an hour late. So you see if I don't have strife at one end its the other - think I'd prefer diving through train windows next time.

Found letter and paper from you and also of course a letter from Goody waiting for me when I got in, very weary I can assure you. Slept from 9.15 to 6 a.m. got up for my shower, and found it cold - what a shock to the system down here at that time of the morning - needless to say, I wasn't under it longer than absolutely necessary.

Cheerio Mum, tons of work to do, so must do it.

Your affectionate son,
Jim

Mess 57 - BM2,
Flinders Naval Depot.
4th Oct., 1942.

Dearest Mum,

Very glad to receive a letter from you yesterday, for as you may imagine, there has been a letter famine for me this week. However, had a parcel from N.S.T. on Friday and it had some welcome contents. There was a long woollen scarf in it that I don't need but no doubt won't have much trouble in getting rid of it.

Went gay on Friday night, and patronised "Cerberus Cinema" and saw "Girls Under 21" (lousy) and "Our Wife" - Melvyn Douglas - for the second time. From the title I couldn't remember having seen it, but as soon as it started I knew I was for it. A breakdown of electricity for about 20 minutes did nothing to help the continuity of the film, and we didn't get out till about 10.20.

Decided yesterday morning that I need a haircut very badly, as hair kept getting in my eyes while playing hockey, so went up in working hours and found half the Depot in the barber's shop and postponed it indefinitely. To correct the length of the hair I simply stood in front of the mirror and lopped off the necessary length myself and will cheat the barber for another week now, although how I'll manage to get "served" then is a mystery.

Did my "dobeying" yesterday afternoon, and was very glad that there wasn't a great deal. My hammock being in need of repairs and also very grubby, I also changed it for a nice new one, the whiteness of which will no doubt deteriorate very swiftly. Spent last night ironing my clothes and reading – a very energetic occupation.

Had intentions of going to Church this morning, but found there was too much work and had to let it slide. I go on to the "job" tomorrow – keeping one section of the seamen's ledger, as the Writer now on it, together with his cobber, volunteered for Port Moresby and have dived off to Tasmania for a spot of leave before going. I'm sick of this Depot, just the same as them, but I'm not going to precipitate things by volunteering for such an uninteresting and

probably objectionable draft, even for the sake of Geo. McGrath's company – I don't think George would want to share his misery, so I'm just sitting tight and hoping for the "Shropshire" draft. I think every other rating bar Writers have been drafted, and I wish they'd hurry up and finalize the matter, even if they don't select me – its the suspense that gives me the willies.

In spite of the wintry chill, I stripped down to my brief shorts and Depot jersey this afternoon and opposed the hockey stalwarts from the Brunswick District. This time I played right wing instead of half back and went pretty well, but it was a willing game – I've never received so many knocks. As well as sundry bruises from the sticks and the ball, I was nearly knocked cold as the result of one particularly violent collision and reeled away with my tongue almost bitten in half and blood streaming from my nose – luckily our jerseys are red – perhaps that's the reason. Got a big hand from the "urgers" on the side line by continuing straight on with the game. At full time the scores were even – 2 goals each, and then some maniac suggested another 10 minutes each way. In spite of the fact that we were exhausted, both teams turned on some exhibition hockey, but after 20 minutes further play, scores were still even – 3 goals each. I really enjoyed the last 20 minutes in spite of very sore feet. Found a couple of beaut. blisters and also a blood blister under my toe, where a sprig had been protruding into the boot.

News has come through that our tropical white rig is to become khaki, & whites will be dyed – we'll lose our smart originality and look like Army or R.A.A.F. then I guess.

Cheerio & love,
Jim

P.S. Do get me a photo of the "Scoops" if O.K.

Chapter 2

From Pollywog to Piccadilly: The Journey to England (October – December 1942)

Jim: Simple code to show where I'm writing from if I go overseas and can't put it in my letter

Dear Mother — East Coast of Australia
Dear Mom — Tasmania
Dear Mum — Indian Ocean
Dear Ma — Mediterranean
Dear Mater — Atlantic Ocean
Dearest Mater — Mid-Pacific Ocean
Dearest Mum — South Africa
Dearest Mom — Colombo
Dearest Mother — England
Mother Darling — Southern Coast of Australia
Mother Dear — New Zealand or vicinity
My dear Mother — West Coast of Australia
My dearest Mother — ~~Singapore~~ America
Mom dear — Top of Australia (Darwin, Port Moresby etc.)

Letter No. 1

Writer J.F. Yeomans - S/5294
Royal Aust. Navy, At Sea
November 1942

Mother dear,

Letters from now onward will require a lot of careful thought to save the censor using the scissors, and I'll just add little incidents from day to day to make it look like a respectable letter. Up to the present I haven't had a qualm, and have eaten everything put in front of me, as well as extras such as ice-cream. It's a wonder that the ice cream alone hasn't made me ill because the normal "serve" is twice the size of a "6d bucket" at home. It's lovely ice-cream – varies in flavour from day to day – yesterday it was full of chopped walnuts.

We're kept pretty busy all day and have a routine that allows no monotony and which will tend to keep us fit and well. Part of it is a session of physical training in bare feet, to toughen the soles of our feet.

Church service was well attended in spite of being voluntary – being on the sun deck might have been an attraction. Went to the 2-hour picture show last night and getting tired of standing, I sprawled on the floor as overalls are "rig-of-the-day" and most convenient for work or leisure.

It's impossible to do anything after nightfall – can't even read in the cabin as the strictest black-out is enforced and we aren't permitted to show a glimmer even in the confines of the cabin, so sleep is the only alternative and not such a bad alternative at that.

Have bumped into 2 chaps I know – Ray Seabrook of the Bronte Swimming Club and Laurie Ellis who was a server at St. Mary's Church.

I've a job to get on with now, so more tomorrow.

Had a pretty solid job last night bumping stores up ladder etc. and bags of flour, sugar, spuds etc. can be pretty heavy, but I guess it will do me good. Was

pretty cold at the time because our work was carried on in the big refrigerating chambers. Glad of a hot shower and then sleep came easily.

Met another lad I knew this morning – shows my memory for names is pretty good! Lad in question was Roy Jarvis, a school mate of mine at Clevo and I haven't sighted him for eight years.

I can see that "dobeying" is going to be a problem – I'll have to wash clothes in the little hand basin I think and hang them in the cabin. Ironing is something I'll go into later. By the way, I got issued with a new sun helmet, life jacket and anti-flash gear, also a "tin hat" before sailing. Will probably be charged for the first 3 items, unless the ones in the F.N.D. baggage store are returned safely into stock. I still find it hard to believe I'm at last away from that place, and it lifts a weight from my mind as I can cease worrying about my draft because this is it.

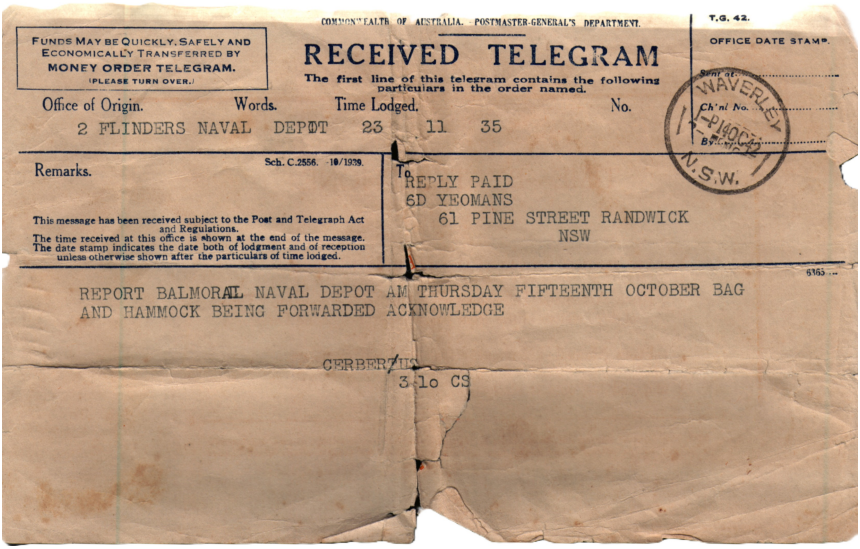
Will finish this off now as I believe the mail is about to close – if I don't get the chance to write a few lines to Bubs, you can tell her the news such as it is and I'll write to her later on, and the same applies for Merle.

Cheerio for now Mother dear and give my best to the Marrises. By the way, I hope you've started forwarding Sunday papers, because I'll be looking forward to them.

Take good care of yourself while I'm away and above all, don't worry about me!

Much love, your fond son,
Jim.

P.S. Don't forget to number your letters.



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.—POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT.

T.G. 42.

FUNDS MAY BE QUICKLY, SAFELY AND ECONOMICALLY TRANSFERRED BY MONEY ORDER TELEGRAM. (PLEASE TURN OVER.)

RECEIVED TELEGRAM

The first line of this telegram contains the following particulars in the order named.

OFFICE DATE STAMP.

Office of Origin. Words. Time Lodged. No.

2 FLINDERS NAVAL DEPOT 23 11 35

WAVERLEY N.S.W.

Remarks.

Sch. C.2556. 10/1939.

This message has been received subject to the Post and Telegraph Act and Regulations.
The time received at this office is shown at the end of the message.
The date stamp indicates the date both of lodgment and of reception unless otherwise shown after the particulars of time lodged.

To REPLY PAID
6D YEOMANS
61 PINE STREET RANDWICK
NSW

REPORT BALMORAL NAVAL DEPOT AM THURSDAY FIFTEENTH OCTOBER BAG AND HAMMOCK BEING FORWARDED ACKNOWLEDGE

CERBERUS
3 10 CS

Telegram from Flinders Naval Depot to confirm that Jim's bag and hammock had been sent to the Balmoral Naval Depot following his departure for London, Oct. 1942. (Jim Yeomans)

Crew members on HMAS Shropshire receiving an issue of ice cream, 1945. (Australian War Memorial, 112186)

Letter No. 2

Writer J.F. Yeomans
Royal Aust. Navy, At Sea
November 1942

Dearest Mater,

As I scrawl this note, the sweat pours from my pores, so you can guess that I'm having a session of tropics. I don't really mind very much, the only trouble being that I have no appetite in such hot weather. The standard of the menu is still high and on occasions we have dishes that were never dreamt of at FND – such as chicken for lunch (twice), iced tomato juice at breakfast (twice), and beautiful grape fruit, also twice.

My skin is considerably browner than when I left home, but I'm taking it easy as I don't want to get sick with sunburn. However I must appreciate the hot weather while it's here, because it represents a whole summer to me. What I wouldn't give for a swim – I feel something like the ancient mariner with water, water everywhere, but I'm afraid they wouldn't wait for me to have a "dip".

By the way, as you might have guessed, before starting this little trip, I called in to see Mr. and Mrs. Marris[1]. Apparently they aren't there any longer, but I amused myself by having a look around that district – was nearly going to ring the new Ever-ready factory but managed to find entertainment without trying to contact anyone knowing the Marrises.

Sat outside in the dark last night trying to cool down and I was intrigued by the little phosphorescent bodies in the ship's wake that look just like the light from a torch beam.

Have played a couple of games of deck hockey in the last couple of days and it's pretty hectic. Sticks are fortunately only light bamboo and they do quite enough damage to shins and the "ball" is a small coiled piece of rope. Good fun but very exhausting.

[1]JIM (post-war): This means New Zealand

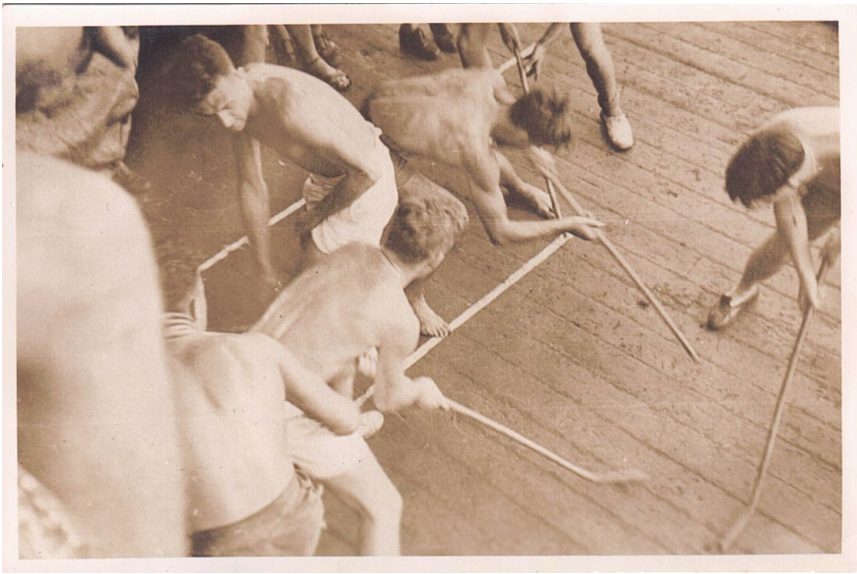
We crossed the equator this afternoon and we had "Neptunes Court" up on the sun deck. Neptune and his accomplices were all dressed up for the occasion and put us "pollywogs" through the initiation ceremony in which we were slapped, bashed, kicked, drenched, painted blue, given cascana mouth wash, and shocked by electrified knives and pitch forks - altogether a gruelling ordeal. So now I am no longer a "pollywog" but a salty "shellback" and hope to get written or printed affirmation of the fact.

Just had a slice of your cake which was made about 6 weeks ago but I appreciate it despite its dryness.

That's all for now Mater, hope you can understand my shocking scrawl, but its written more or less under difficulty.

All my love for yourself and regards to all the folks –look after yourself.

As ever, your fond son,
Jim.



Crew members on HMAS Shropshire playing deck hockey, 1943-45. (Jim Yeomans)

THE LORD MAYOR'S PATRIOTIC AND WAR FUND OF N.S.W.

(N.S.W. Division of the Australian Comforts Fund)

Writer J. F. Yeomans-95294.

(Royal Aust. Navy)

At Sea.

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As I scrawl this note, the sweat pours from my pores so you can guess that I'm having a session of tropics. I don't really mind very much, the only trouble being that I have no appetite in such hot weather. The standard of the menu is still high & on occasions we have dishes that were never dreamt of at HMD – such as chicken for lunch (twice) iced tomato juice at breakfast (twice) & beautiful grape fruit, also twice.

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IN YOUR LETTER DO NOT REFER TO:

The name of your ship or other ships in the convoy or its escorts; the dates of sailing, ports of call, or probable destination; the description of troops aboard; any other information which, if intercepted, would be of value to the enemy.

Letter written while heading for London via the U.S., page 1

THE LORD MAYOR'S PATRIOTIC AND WAR FUND OF N.S.W.

(N.S.W. Division of the Australian Comforts Fund)

A.C.F.

want to go sick with sunburn. However, I must appreciate the hot weather while its here, because it represents a whole summer to me. What I wouldn't give for a swim - I feel something like the ancient Mariner with water, water everywhere, but I'm afraid they wouldn't wait for me to have a "dip."

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Letter written while heading for London via the U.S., page 2

THE LORD MAYOR'S PATRIOTIC AND WAR FUND OF N.S.W.

(N.S.W. Division of the Australian Comforts Fund)

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Letter written while heading for London via the U.S., page 3

THE LORD MAYOR'S PATRIOTIC AND WAR FUND OF N.S.W.

(N.S.W. Division of the Australian Comforts Fund)

were slapped, lashed, kicked, drenched, painted blue, given cascara mouth wash, & shocked by electrified knives & pitch forks - altogether a gruelling ordeal. So now I am no longer a "pollywog" but a salty "shellback" & hope to get written or printed affirmation of the fact.

Just had a slice of your cake which was made about 6 weeks ago but I appreciated it despite its dryness.

That's all for now dear, hope you can understand my shocking scrawl but its written more or less under difficulty.

All my love for yourself & regards to all the folks - look after yourself.

As ever, your fond son,

Jim

IN YOUR LETTER DO NOT REFER TO:

The name of your ship or other ships in the convoy or its escorts; the dates of sailing, ports of call, or probable destination; the description of troops aboard; any other information

Letter written while heading for London via the U.S., page 4

Letter No. 3

Writer J.F. Yeomans
Royal Aust. Navy, At Sea
November 1942

My Dearest Mother,

Since last writing to you – I didn't number the letter, by the way but it should be 2 – we have travelled onward and I now find myself on the verge of my second Winter in succession and trust it is not too severe. Already it's noticeably colder and the days seem to be alarmingly short. Actually we are behind Australian time now, due to the fact that we had 2 days in succession on which the day and date was identical.

I'm still very pleased at getting this trip, although I have fleeting regrets when I think of the sun and surf I'll miss, but if I'd been in Melb. I would have missed the latter in any case.

As I told you previously, we had a "Neptune Ceremony" while crossing the line, and I duly received a little "certificate of initiation" of which I'm quite proud and it will have a place of honour among my trophies etc.

Attended Communion Service this morning, very similar to ours except that the bread and wine is brought around and the wine is in numerous little containers, one for each person, instead of one big cup. Actually we have a short Church service each morning.

Have to repack my bag now and put all the tropical gear right away and put woollens etc. in easy reach. May yet be very glad of those long undies. Must confess that I wilt every time I think of moving my baggage which seems to grow every day and takes a lot of looking after.

The announcement of a free issue of ice cream by the canteen this afternoon attracted a huge queue and eating it just before a competition game of deck hockey against the Air Force wasn't wise policy. However, our team still managed to win the closely contested game by a small margin and as always I

finished in a lather of sweat, and amassing several bruises.

We expect to be able to sight ...[censored]... and that will be a great change from the sea-scenery of the past weeks.

I'll surely be glad to hear a radio again; because one thing I missed more than anything else is music. However, during the next week or so, I should hear plenty of it and just the way I like it. I'm living in hope that I'll be able to see as well as hear at least one of my favourites.

From now onward, I guess my letters will be slow in coming Mum, but there'll always be some on the way, so don't worry if they're a bit scarce. Take good care of yourself till I get back.

Much love,
Jim.

Near the Equator, Lieutenant M. J. Gregory of the RAN played the part of Queen Neptune during the Crossing the Line Ceremony on the deck of HMAS Shropshire en route to London for the Victory Celebrations, May 1946. (Australian War Memorial, 129921)

Letter No. 4

Writer J. Yeomans
Royal Aust. Navy
10th November, 1942

Dear Mater,

This will have to serve as a letter to the whole family and friends as I haven't a great deal of time.

We've just finished ...[censored]... and we were most comfortable on the train and the trip was very interesting and I'm looking forward to telling you about it, perhaps in a later letter.

I spent some time in a city recently and had a pretty hectic time, looking round at points of interest and seeing the very varied nightlife. After a long period without music, I was able to revel in the playing of some of my favourites who I saw in the flesh. Cash went quickly, but I've still got enough and don't begrudge what was spent.

Went in for some beauty treatment yesterday – as I had a lot of dirt in the pores of my skin as a result of the train trip, I let the barber give me a face massage, complete with hot and freezing towels, lotion etc., and felt marvellous after he finished. You wouldn't dream what price I had to pay though!

Managed to meet a lot of people and found them very hospitable and we were very popular with them and I hope we come here again later. If you see Betty Newsway tell her that I wasn't able to find the time to go out to see her Aunt.

Not much I can tell you now Mum, but I'll make up for it when I get home.

It will be close to Xmas when you get this, so Merry Xmas Mum and remember I'll be thinking of you. Don't forget to give my Xmas greetings to the Marrises.

Keep your chin up.

Cheerio and much love,
Jim.

Personalised Letter from Mrs. Isabel Tilden Riggs

25 East 86th Street
New York City
Nov 23rd, 1942

Dear Mrs Yeomans,

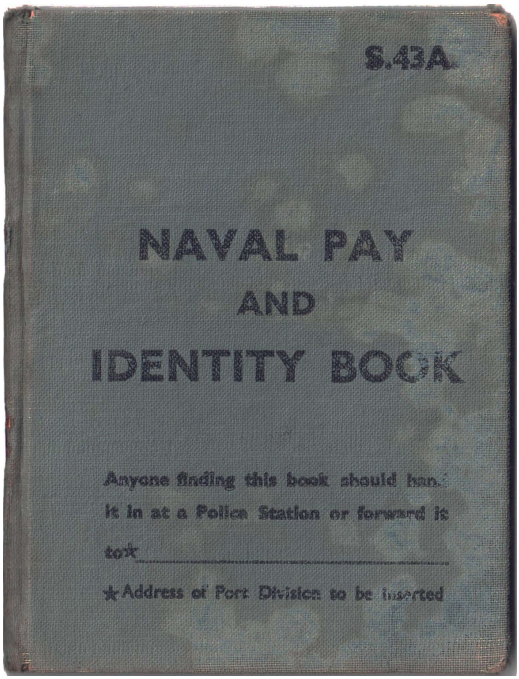
I am so glad to enclose to you this nice photograph taken at the "Lunch Time Canteen" by one of our A.W.V.S. girls. It is a great privilege to welcome these fine boys, who are also our gallant allies. I wonder if their picture will reach you in the Christmas season - when our minds and hearts will turn to the thought and hope of "Peace on Earth and good will to men". We send you our greetings and many good wishes.

Sincerely yours,
Isabel Tilden Riggs

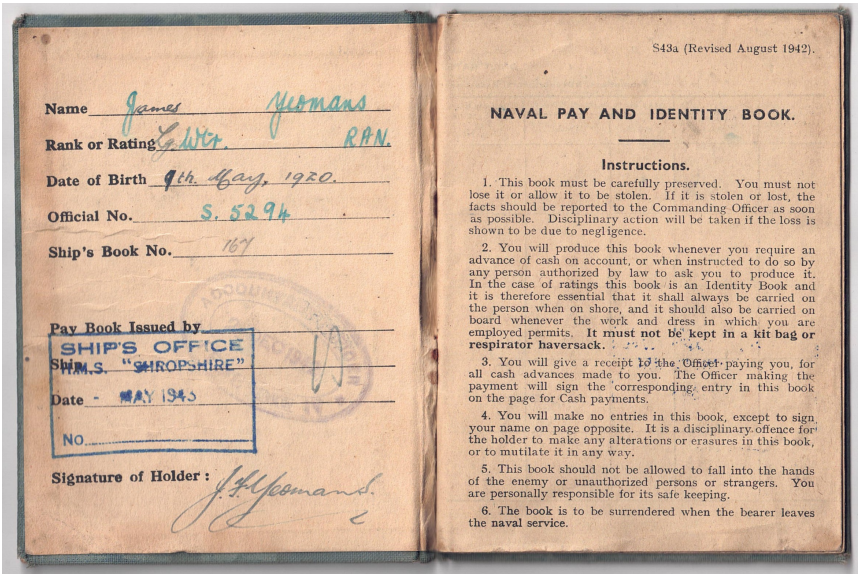
Portrait of Jim wearing RAN service dress, 1942-45. (Jim Yeomans)

Chapter 3

Leave, London, and the Long Voyage Home (December 1942 – October 1943)



In December 1942, after arriving in London, Jim was issued with a Naval Pay and Identity Book, 1942. (Jim Yeomans)



S43a (Revised August 1942).

NAVAL PAY AND IDENTITY BOOK.

Name James Yeomans

Rank or Rating Lt. Wtr. RAN.

Date of Birth 9th. May, 1920.

Official No. S. 5294

Ship's Book No. 167

Pay Book Issued by

SHIP'S OFFICE
H.M.S. "SHROPSHIRE"

Date - MAY 1943

NO.

Signature of Holder : J. S. Yeomans.

Instructions.

1. This book must be carefully preserved. You must not lose it or allow it to be stolen. If it is stolen or lost, the facts should be reported to the Commanding Officer as soon as possible. Disciplinary action will be taken if the loss is shown to be due to negligence.

2. You will produce this book whenever you require an advance of cash on account, or when instructed to do so by any person authorized by law to ask you to produce it. In the case of ratings this book is an Identity Book and it is therefore essential that it shall always be carried on the person when on shore, and it should also be carried on board whenever the work and dress in which you are employed permits. **It must not be kept in a kit bag or respirator haversack.**

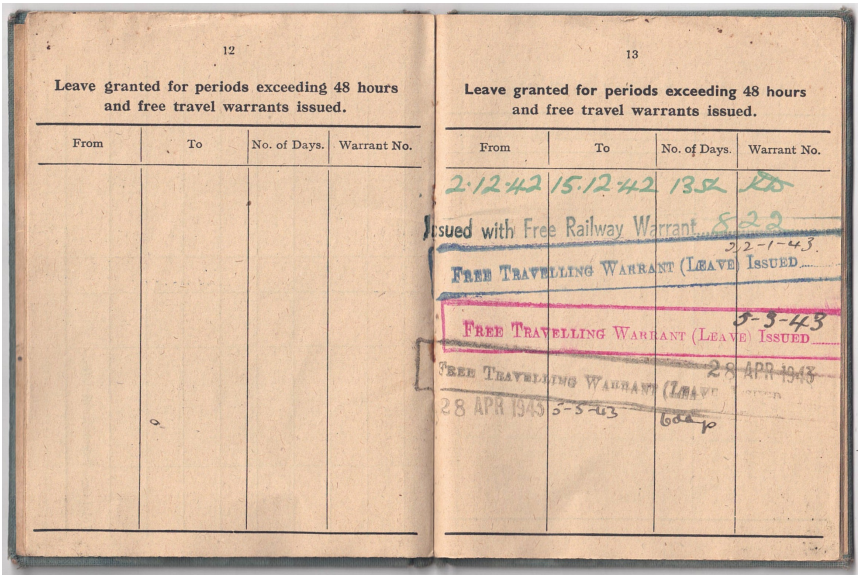
3. You will give a receipt to the Officer paying you, for all cash advances made to you. The Officer making the payment will sign the corresponding entry in this book on the page for Cash payments.

4. You will make no entries in this book, except to sign your name on page opposite. It is a disciplinary offence for the holder to make any alterations or erasures in this book, or to mutilate it in any way.

5. This book should not be allowed to fall into the hands of the enemy or unauthorized persons or strangers. You are personally responsible for its safe keeping.

6. The book is to be surrendered when the bearer leaves the naval service.

First page of Jim's Naval Pay and Identity Book, 1942. (Jim Yeomans)



12

Leave granted for periods exceeding 48 hours and free travel warrants issued.

From	To	No. of Days.	Warrant No.

13

Leave granted for periods exceeding 48 hours and free travel warrants issued.

From	To	No. of Days.	Warrant No.
2-12-42	15-12-42	13	R.D.
Issued with Free Railway Warrant			822
		22-1-43.	
FREE TRAVELLING WARRANT (LEAVE) ISSUED			
		5-3-43	
FREE TRAVELLING WARRANT (LEAVE) ISSUED			
		28 APR 1943	
FREE TRAVELLING WARRANT (LEAVE)			
28 APR 1943	5-5-43	6da	

Pages documenting leave granted. The dates listed include Jim's trips to Luton Beds to visit Lily Stangham, Cheshire to visit Mrs Cubbins and Burntisland, Fife where he and Col Curtis stayed with Will Alison, 1942-43. (Australian War Memorial, 129921)

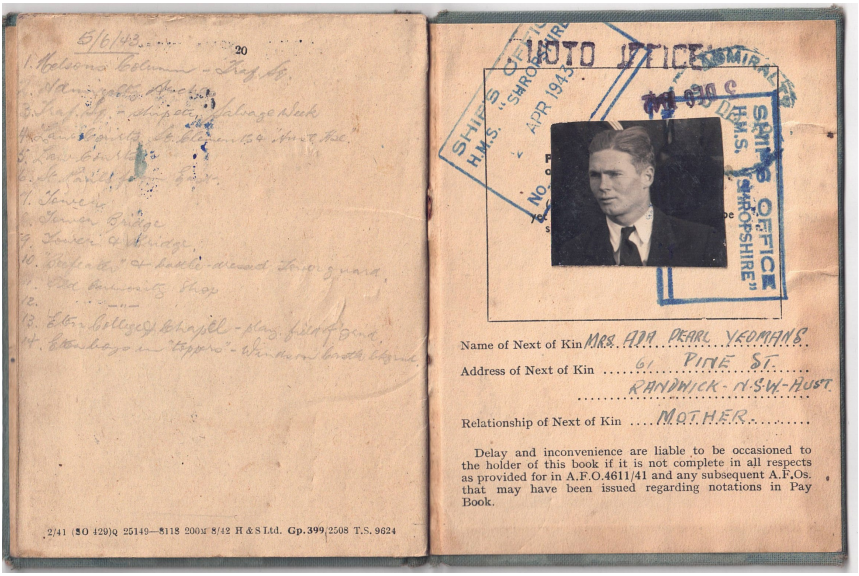

20
5/6/43
1. Nelsons Column - Traf. Sq.
2. Admiralty Arch
3. Traf. Sq. - shops etc, Salvage Week
4. Law Courts, St. Clements & Aust. House
5. Law Courts
6. St Pauls
7. Tower
8. Tower Bridge
9. Tower & Bridge
10. Beefeater & battle-dressed Tower guard
11. Old Curiosity Shop
12. –
13. Eton College & Chapel
14. Eton boys in "toppers" - Windsor Castle
2/41 (SO 429)Q 25149—5118 200M 8/42 H & S Ltd. Gp.399/2508 T.S. 9624
NOTO OFFICE
SHIPS OFFICE H.M.S. "SHROPSHIRE"
APR 1943
Name of Next of Kin MRS. ADA PEARL YEOMANS
Address of Next of Kin 61 PINE ST.
RANDWICK - N.S.W - AUST
Relationship of Next of Kin MOTHER
Delay and inconvenience are liable to be occasioned to the holder of this book if it is not complete in all respects as provided for in A.F.O.4611/41 and any subsequent A.F.Os. that may have been issued regarding notations in Pay Book.

Photo ID and details of next of kin at the back of the book. On the opposite page, Jim has listed various sightseeing destinations in London under the date "5/6/43", including:

1. Nelson's Column - Trafalgar Square
2. Admiralty Arch
3. Traf. Sq. - shop etc, Salvage Week
4. Law Courts, St. Clements & Aust. House
5. Law Courts
6. St Pauls
7. Tower
8. Tower Bridge
9. Tower & Bridge
10. Beefeater & battle-dressed Tower guard
11. Old Curiosity Shop
12. –
13. Eton College & Chapel
14. Eton boys in "toppers" - Windsor Castle

———————————————

June 1943. (Jim Yeomans)

Letter No. 5

18 Castle Road
Liscard, Cheshire
6th Dec., 1942

Dearest Mother,

Perhaps Mrs. Marris will recognize the above address as being that of her sister Mrs. Cubbins with whom I'm staying for a few days on leave. The phrase "everything happens to me" was particularly coined for your son I think and it's hard to know where to start my rigmarole. Perhaps the beginning would be the logical place so I'll back-track a little. By now, Bubs will probably have a letter in which I told all I was allowed in connection with our time spent in U.S. so you'd best read her letter, so I won't have to fill this with stale news. You might tell her one thing I forgot to mention was meeting the celebrated Luise Rainer in the "Stagedoor Canteen" in New York. I told Bubs that I expected to get several days leave which I duly got, so I take up my story there.

In company with mates I journeyed up to London and stayed the night at an annexe to the Union Jack Club, thoughtfully donated by Lord Nuffield. We only dared cross the road to get a drink and a meal, as the blackout is fair dinkum and there's no hope of finding anything in the way of entertainment as it's impossible to tell a theatre from an A.R.P. centre. However we made good use of the time by sewing on our cherished "Australia" shoulder patches on uniform and overcoat. By the way, I've bought a heavy top coat since I got here.

In the morning I got on to the "Information girl" in the telephone dept. and asked her to look up the Luton telephone directory for the address of Stangham's, who however haven't got the phone. I spun a good yarn and the whole story is too long to tell here, but in 1/2 hour I rang her back and she had their address and the nearest telephone no. which was in No. 34 while Stang's address was 74.

I took the plunge and rang 34 and she very kindly raced down the street for Mrs. S. who came to the phone breathless and almost threw a fit when

she found out who it was. I know nothing I do will surprise you now, but I think Mrs. S. will be amazed eternally. She arranged to meet me at the station at Luton and I spent the rest of the day looking round London which didn't greatly impress me, but perhaps a light fog was a bad influence. I had a look at the Covent Garden, Opera House, Piccadilly and Leicester Square and went inside St. Paul's Cathedral, and when the time came took a train from St. Pancras Station to Luton. Mrs. S was waiting for me and knew me – resemblance to Percy Yeomans she reckons – he will be pleased and I knew her in spite of increased weight and wearing glasses.

She was certainly pleased to see me and talked solidly for 2 nights and one day. However, she was really very good and wants to see more of me. Mr. S. was in R.A.F. camp, but she expects him for Xmas. No doubt you will have a letter from her soon.

I left Luton on Saturday morning and came on to Wallasey. Went to Seacombe Ferry P.O. and it was shut. Got an address in Caithness Drive from the Ferry people and found that Mrs. Cubbin had left there years ago. After MUCH enquiry I finally got her present street, traipsed here and finally found the number. No one home, but neighbours persuaded me to stay for a meal and light conversation and I came in later. Actually I'd sent a wire earlier, but being Saturday afternoon they didn't get it. Mrs. Cubbin is very much like Mrs. Marris and there'd be no difficulty in seeing the family resemblance.

I'll stay with them a couple of days and have brought some food and also plenty of coupons so I won't be taking their allowance. Actually they do quite well over here except for lack of variety, but they are nowhere near starved.

I tramped round today with the daughter Arline, and saw much of interest. Saw the Church, St. John's, where Mr. and Mrs. Marris were married and it looks a little worse for wear. Met Mrs. M's brother, Mr. Gregory, who is a Lieut. in the Home Guard and had many duties today. Also met his wife and children. Will close off now and will give an account of the remainder of my leave when I return to duty. Mrs. Cubbin and Arline send their regards to you and to Mr. and Mrs. Marris.

Tell Mr. M. that we can't place the "Dorothy" he told me to look for

Much love Mother dear,

Your fond son
Jim.

Australian sailors visit London during their leave. The sailors take a walk down the strand passing Australia House, 1941. (Australian War Memorial, 006406)

Diggers and sailors visit London, 1940. (Australian War Memorial, 002736)

Letter from Lily Stanghan to Ada Pearle Yeomans

74 St Michaels Crescent,
Luton Beds,
England
Sunday 6th December, 1942

My Dear Mrs. Yeomans & all my "Aussie friends"

I know you will get a very pleasant surprise to hear from me, after all this long time, just as much as I did last Thursday morning (Dec 3rd) at about 9:15.

There was a terrific knock on my front door and a lady stood there who I had never seen in my life. She said to me, "Are you Mrs. Stanghan?" and of course I said "Yes". So when she said "Leave everything and come just as you are to No. 74, St. Michaels, as there is a phone message for you from London from an Australian." I wish you could have seen me, the neighbours thought I had gone mad. I was in my slippers and overall and no hat and it was snowing like the devil. I never knew I could run so fast. Of course when I arrived at this house I was nearly breathless but managed to say "Hello" and a voice came back from the other end, "Is that you Mrs. Stanghan?" and when I said "It is" the voice came back "Well this is Jim speaking." I said "Jim who?" and when he said "Jim Yeomans," I nearly dropped the receiver. My, and it was a shock but a pleasant surprise. Well, we had a yarn on the phone and by 4 o'clock I had met him in at Luton station and strangely enough we knew one another after all these years, although we told each other what we would be wearing.

You can well imagine how we talked about you all, and I wondered if your ears were burning. Was pleased to know that Merle was happily married and had got a little baby also that Bubs and her family were well and Percy and family. How nice too that you have got Mr. and Mrs. Marris staying with you again. Give everyone my love and tell them all how excited and proud I was to have Jim here.

He stayed with me for 2 days and we simply had a glorious time; dashing all over the place out to lunch with another of my lady friends and to the pictures, also out one evening with another friend to have a drink (only one mind you).

It was lovely to have him here and he was quite at home in a very few minutes and enjoyed all his food, said it was the best he had had since arriving in England so naturally that did me good. The only thing that was wrong he was cold so I put 2 hot water bottles in his bed, left the electric stove on, and tucked him in well and then he did get warm. We had a real good laugh the first morning, when I took him a cup of tea up, I couldn't find him, he was well and truly under the bed clothes.

I went to the station to see him off on the 9 o'clock train yesterday morning to Manchester, then he was going on to Liverpool to see Mrs. Marris' people, so am waiting to hear now from him as all being well he is going to break his journey home and stay with me again next weekend, before returning to London. He is stationed near there for the time being and it will be very easy for him to get to Luton. He has got 12 days leave this time: I've told him that while he is so near and easy to get to me, he can spend all his leaves with me and you can rest assured that I shall look after him and do all I possibly can to make him happy. I think he has grown into a lovely boy. He dropped a few lines to Mr. Stanghan and put it in with my letter on Thursday night, guess he will get a shock. As you know he is Sgt. in the RAF and still in this country thank goodness.

I was so sorry that he wasn't here so that he could see Jim and I daren't write him or he could have tried to have got home and I am expecting him home for 7 or 9 days at Christmas and if Jim can get any time off at all, he will come and spend it with us, if not, we shall find a way out and go to town and see him. Jim saw Mr. Stanghan's father, who is now 84, but he didn't have time to go and see any of my people, but hope to next time. I took him in to one of the hat factories, where I work in the afternoons. I did say I would like to send you a hat if it was possible when Jim returned, but we both decided it couldn't be done.

I am living here alone again now and believe me it is very lonely although we have got a lot to be thankful for as we have been very quiet again lately, you will know what I mean. Jim went and had a look at my (Shelter) – glad we did it, have to use it. I can tell you this he's not very keen on the Blackout and I would like to know who is. By the way Jim only arrived in this country last Friday week from the States and my word has he had a marvellous time, it's only natural. I told him I should smack his (BUM) if he didn't stop telling

me of all the lovely things he had had to eat. He made me roar with laughing about what he did in a cafe in London. He asked the girl for some porridge for his breakfast and when he got it, it wasn't sweet enough so he opened his case and from among his shoes, pyjamas, hair brushes etc. he fished out a pound of sugar that he bought over there and naturally the girl looked bewildered. I'm telling you all these little bits, so that you too can all have a laugh.

Should love to hear what you will have to say after you have read this letter, also Percy, Bubs and Merle. But I know from the short time that Jim was here that he couldn't write and tell you all these little things so I thought I would. Do hope you are keeping well, Mrs. Yeomans, and do pray hard that this war will soon be over. I do think it's dreadful. Mr. Stanghan has been away for over 3 years now, he went 2 weeks before the war started and I'm sure I miss him more than ever, it is 3 months since I saw him, but somehow with Jim being up I feel more than ever thankful that I've got Puce in this country. That is why I shall do all I can for dear Jim for your sake. He seemed very cheerful though and talked lots about you all, even of the first day when I arrived in Australia.

Well my dears I've got a letter to write to my darling Puce and then soon to bed. I shall long to get a letter back from you. So goodnight to you all and May God Bless and Keep you safe and Well is the sincere Wish

Your loving friend
Lily Stanghan xx

P.S. And I was to be sure to send Jim's love to you ALL in "AUSSIE" because he said I should write immediately BYE-BYE.

P.P.S. I forgot to tell how Jim found me. He rang up LUTON Post Office and asked them if they knew where Stanghans lived. He had to ring back in half an hour and by then they had got full particulars – SIMPLY MARVELLOUS.

Letter No. 6

C/o Naval Liaison Officer,
H.M.A. London Depot,
The Strand,
LONDON.
14.12.42

Dearest Mother,

A copy of this is for Merle, so I hope this is acceptable to both of you because I am rather rushed for time at present and look like being very busy forever.

My lovely 12 days leave have ended and I am at long last onboard the ship I set my mind on so long ago, but my mail is still to be addressed as above until further notice and that will be quite some time, so don't expect to see me bowling into the house just yet awhile. At the present moment, I'm playing a lone hand in my side of the job, owing to mishaps and misunderstanding, the Chief WRITER and Paymaster Lieutenant who would have been in charge, will not appear on the scene for some months, so I'm the whole works.

As you probably know by now, I started my leave off by visiting Mrs. Stanghan whose address I secured by devious reasons and I believe she has already written a long letter to Aussie. After leaving her, I journeyed over to Wallasey, where after some trouble I found Mrs. Marris' sister Mrs. Cubbin and I stayed there several days and was made to feel very much at home. It's quite easy to see the family resemblance and she even talks like Mrs. Marris. I went up for supper one night at Mr. Gregory's – Mrs. M's brother and while in Liverpool I called on Mr. G.W. Marris at his business, and Mr. M should have a letter from him soon. All of them had their share of the blitz, but still have a whole skin so that's the main thing. Mrs. Cubbin's daughter Arline and I had a few bad moments when going across in the ferry when a barrage balloon broke loose in the boisterous wind and blew into the ferry, and as we were on top deck in the open we didn't feel exactly happy, especially as I was afraid it would puncture and explode.

I took a bus ride of about 1½hours to the old city of Chester one day. The ride from the top of the bus was nice, and the city itself was the England I had hoped to see. The Cathedral is all very old and parts of it go back to Saxon times and there was a list of the Bishops back to the 12th century. The whole city is really much the same as in Tudor days, and I like the Tudor building best of all – you know the black and white gable architecture. The streets are very narrow and nearly all very crooked, and the whole city is surrounded by a wall that the Romans built and it is as good almost as the day it was built. On this wall is a tower where King Charles stood and watched his Cavaliers defeated by Cromwell's army, and that tower is now a little museum containing relics right back through the Middle ages to Roman and Saxon times, and some of the coins and armour etc. were dug up in the main streets as late as 1937. The River Dee is close handy, and all its bridges are pretty ancient and it must be beautiful in the summer – only wish you could all have been there to see it. Probably Mum and Bubs would revel in it even more than I did. Some of the shops and especially "pubs" are very old and I later went to the pictures there in a building that was originally constructed in 1280 and they claim it as the oldest cinema in the world in their adverts, and I'm not disputing it.

Went to a dance at "The Tower", Wallasey with Arline that night and enjoyed myself as usual. People aren't so scared about going out in the black-out now and there are good attendances at the dances. Seems to be quite a lot of girls and they aren't backward about asking for a dance or "tapping" another girl's partner – I was very amused at first.

Decided to push on from Wallasey, and going on past Chester I stopped at Connah's Quay, North Wales at a little Hotel there, and the proprietor and his wife looked after me very well, and made me very comfortable. The food I had there was as good and as plentiful as I'd get at home. Met a very nice Welsh girl named Doreen, who was fair-haired and very interesting, and being an excellent dancer we went to dances on the Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. She was a match for me in most things, and had similar tastes to me, and coupled with an occasional Welsh accent, was altogether a dangerous proposition. I didn't make plans ahead, and the day's programme was always made on the spur of the moment. Went to Rhyl one day – it was a seaside resort in summer, but nothing much now, and I patronised the local pictures there to see Bing and Fred Astaire in "Holiday Inn". Went down to Llandudno and Conway another day and they are both old and very quaint, Conway of course having

a famous old castle, about which Mr. Marris will no doubt be able to inform you. I used up a lot of photos during the leave but the difficulty will be in having them printed as photographic supplies are rather scarce. However, I have left my spools with Mrs. S's brother Ken, who will do them if he can get the material.

Going back was no picnic, as the train was packed. I had to change to another train at Crewe and sat on my bag in the corridor thereafter and when I finally did get to Luton was in a pretty vile humour. Mrs. S. was anxiously waiting and had a huge meal ready. She is expecting Mr. S. for Xmas and hopes I can get out to see him. She seems to think that I am her special responsibility while I'm here, while I prefer to remain the lone wolf, and thus see more and meet more people, especially as Luton has nothing at all of interest to me. We went over to Wellwyn Garden City the next day to see her brother Ken, and it seems a very nice place, and I think I'd get on well with him and his wife.

Stayed the night in London at the address you see on the first page, and its a very nice place and I could do much worse than to stay there every leave, although Mrs. S. seems determined to have me out to Luton each time. Went to a dinner dance at the Regent Palace, Piccadilly that night and met a very nice girl who lives at Edgeware and I have filed her away for future reference. Poked around London the next day, and find it a very expensive place, and also its terribly easy to get "bushed" in which respect it differs considerably from New York. My leave finished that night, which was just as well as my exchequer was looking very sick, and I'll have to take it easy till next pay comes along. As you can guess I haven't sighted any mail yet, and am looking forward to it, and also hoping for some parcels from the club etc. Cheerio for now, give my regards to all interested and much love yourself Mum.

Your fond son,
Jim.

= Letter No. 7. =

BOOMERANG CLUB

AUSTRALIA HOUSE
STRAND · LONDON · W.C.2

Writer J.F. Yeomans, S.5294,
c/o Naval Liason Officer,
H.M.A. London Depot,
"Australia House",
Strand, LONDON W.C.2
28 December, 1942.

Dearest Mother,

As you can see from the souvenir letter paper, I have once again had a little leave in London, calling as usual at Aussie House, but as yet no mail has appeared for me. However, I have had a couple of letters and a Xmas card from "local" inhabitants - a nice letter inviting me to stay at Cardiff from Betty's cousin Elsie Newsway, and a letter and card from my little fair haired Welsh girl. Unfortunately, the invite from the Newsway's came too late for the leave I had, but I hope to be able to get over there to see them before we leave the country.

In spite of being almost flat broke, I managed to find enough for the fare and a little over to Luton, as Mrs. S. had so earnestly wanted me to be there for Xmas - I sent them a wire to say I was coming, but arrived before it - not that it mattered. On my way, I dropped in to Aussie House and met an old Clevo boy - Pax Jones by name who is now in the RAAF. Even from the back I thought it was him, and he knew me as soon as he looked. Small world yes? He was in short pants last time I saw him - so was I for that matter.

Caught the train to Luton from London, and it WAS packed - it would have been impossible to get another person in our carriage - I just managed to squeeze inside the door, and stood all the way.

As I expected, Perce Stanghan was home on leave - he's an RAF Sergeant in case you didn't know and he was delighted to see me. Naturally he looks older, but I would have known him anywhere. As it was Xmas Eve, the three of us went out after tea and toured around the Luton pubs & in the course of the evening I met all his three brothers and we finished up with friends of Mrs. S. That's the trouble with her, she wants to cart me round all the time - Mrs. Tracey was my ideal - she didn't worry me about meeting their friends, and I could come and go as I liked, provided she knew how and when I wanted to eat. Perce was in a happy frame of mind when we got back home, but quite steady on his feet etc - after all, it was Xmas Eve.

He woke me in the morning at dawn - approx. 9 a.m.

Letter from "Australia House", London. Dec. 1942. (Jim Yeomans)

Letter No. 7

C/o Naval Liaison Officer,
H.M.A. London Depot,
"Australia House",
Strand, LONDON W/C/2.
28 December, 1942

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Tracey was my ideal – she didn't worry me about meeting their friends, and I could come and go as I liked, provided she knew how and when I wanted to eat. Perce was in a happy frame of mind when we got back home, but quite steady on his feet etc – after all, it was Xmas Eve.

He woke me in the morning at dawn – approx. 9 a.m. with a cup of tea, and he dashed off to get a chicken, that they had only been able to obtain at the last minute the night before. They had both been very miserable at the idea of Xmas Dinner without poultry – I'll bet they paid a good price for the chicken. However, it was a very nice one as I discovered at dinnertime when that appeared on my plate. Mrs. S. really did very well, and our plates were well-filled, and she also made a nice pudding and we had a couple of bottles of Guinness Stout to wash it down.

I took things fairly easy in front of the fire during the afternoon and probably dozed off once or twice. After tea we called on Perce's brother Jack, who is older than Perce and was a Writer in the R.N. during the last War, and I got on well with him. The visit had been arranged the night before, mainly so that I could play his piano, which I did for over an hour. As we were going in the gate, the neighbours called us in, and we had a night-cap before turning in. All the Stanghans know me now.

Had to return to the ship, next day (Boxing Day) and they saw me off on the train. No buses running so we had to walk to the station and it was very cold as compared to the fine day for Xmas. Arriving at London, I once again got in to Aussie House, and a RAAF chap with a moustache claimed to be a Clevo schoolmate of mine – his name was Kemp. I just remember his face although none of my pals at school had moustaches, but I can't remember anything about him, so it just goes to show.

Back on board the ship, I find that they are now allowing R.A.N. ratings to have a tot of rum at midday each day, and after having one, I felt dopey for the afternoon, could have slept anywhere, so I'll have "T" for temperance marked in my account, and hope I draw my 3d. per day for it. They can have their Grog!

There isn't a great deal to tell just at present Mum, except not to worry about me at all, and look after yourself. This weather gets me down a bit, and I certainly like to be lapping up the sun at home, with the beach close handy –

but maybe that will happen next year if we can settle this strife quick enough. If it finishes in Summer, I'll spend the whole Summer on the beach before I think of work again – I'll bet I won't be alone either.

I've heard talk about getting a hockey team together, and will try to make the team, so that I can keep in condition – hear that we are to play a team of WRNS soon, so I may be able to report on that in my next.

Cheerio for now, and lots of love – regards to all the folks that you happen to bump into and once again, don't worry about me.

Your fond son,
Jim.

Letter No. 8

S.5294
Writer J. F. Yeomans,
C/o Naval Liaison Officer,
H.M.A. London Depot,
"Australia House",
The Strand, LONDON
3 Jan., 1943

Dearest Mother,

The New Year opened very well for me, because on the first day I received my first Aussie mail – the bare 11 letters including the ones you enclosed in your letters, for by the way, I received your Nos. 1 & 2 letters together. I understand that there are quite a lot yet to come to our Aussie House, and feel sure there'll be even more for me, because there wasn't a letter from Bubs in the first batch & she's sure to have written.

From your first letter I see that Percy had quite a run o' luck at the races, & you might remind him that he has a small brother trying to see the world on an incredibly small salary! There is such a thing as cabling cash I've heard. You mention "Grand Fils" winning at 25 to 1 – only too well do I remember backing him straight out in the last race the day we were at Randwick, & I would have liked to cash in on his win. It's only just dawned on me why you should say "Mrs. Long felt very home-sick!" Tell her I haven't forgotten my promise, & will put some slushy, icy mud into an envelope in my kit & maybe it will be dry by the time I get home. Her daughter Betty sounds O.K. but you'd best tell her to enclose a photograph when she writes as I don't go for blind dates. Wish you wouldn't write about the oranges you brought from Castle Hill – people over here don't know what oranges or bananas especially look like. You should hear the "Ohhh!" that goes up in a theatre if they happen to eat them in the picture. I see from your second letter that you received my first O.K. & hope you get all the rest too – the mail service these days is pretty good I think – due of course to the good efforts of the Navy.

You put Stanghan's address on your second letter, but by now you know

that I located them without that aid, but telling exactly how, is a tale that can wait for the telling for it to be properly appreciated. Too bad we did no good with the Lottery ticket I bought you, but nevertheless we're bound to strike it lucky one day – law of averages! Glad you heard from Mrs. Tracey – I expect she'll get a letter from their family in my next mail, I hope. They were certainly great friends to me, & I'd like to know how young "Bouncy" Brownjohn from the Surf Club got on staying with them, in place of me.

I thought that "W" badge would turn up sometime & if I don't want it, they are always easy to sell. Up to date I haven't received the parcel you mention from the Randwick Auxl. or your own, or any parcel for that matter, but hope they turn up O.K. as they'll be put to a good use – also hope you are sending those Sunday papers – I'll send them on to the Stanghans when I finish with them. They're still Australia mad! It's very strange that you mention the text on the church envelope – "Lord watch between me & thee when we are absent one from another" – till a week ago I'd never heard the phrase, but I was looking at some trinkets in a window in London & I only read the inscription on one of them, & that was the above phrase – seems queer doesn't it?

As I've already told you, my New Year's Day mail was 11 letters & these included ones from George McGrath, who speaks of bumping into Syd Worrall in Papua, one from Col Ayres, one from Olive Smith, a letter & a nice Xmas card from a girl at work, & two letters from Merle. No letter from either Bubs nor Goody, so I shall expect them next week.

You will notice in my last letter that I mentioned a challenge hockey match we were to play against the Women's Royal Naval Service, or as they are called – "Wrens" – sad to relate we were beaten 1 goal to nil. Naturally we have lots of excuses for such a sad happening, but I won't bore you with them. Just before the match, one of our officers named "Beattie" and the only other lowly rating beside myself playing, "Goodacre" were chatting about home towns etc & it turned out that both of them come from of all places – "Cudal". Would you know either of their names? At anyrate after the match, the Wrens invited us back to supper with them, but as we had to shower & change to good uniforms & it was a long way in the dark, we decided that we had too much work to do, & politely refused, although I would have liked to see how they run their Messes. Speaking about walking around in the dark, I can't start to tell you how much I appreciate that torch Bubs bought me over a year ago – it's a godsend now.

I stayed onboard working New Year's Eve and was in the old hammock by 10.30 so that's the second "Eve" I haven't celebrated. Actually, the English don't worry about much celebration at New Year, but leave it to the Scots who do love their "Hogmanay" celebration.

Naturally being in my position, I'd heard that a new R.A.N. rating had joined the ship the previous evening, but I wasn't prepared for a hard-bitten A.B. who came to our Mess New Year morning looking for me. He put out his hand at the sight of me, and I looked at him disbelievingly. But my eyes were right, it was Colin Thomson who went with me to join the Navy in June, 1940, when I enlisted as an Anti-Sub. Seaman – you probably remember me speaking about him, because he used to go with a girl who lives in Market Street. Strangely enough, same girl is now betrothed to one of the other seamen on this ship.[1] They know each other, but haven't met yet, owing to the latter being on leave. To continue – I'd heard that Col was a Sub. Lieut. but apparently he dipped his Commission. He was a very quiet lad when he went down with me, but he looks plenty tough now – however is still a good bloke. He hasn't been home for over two years, and doesn't seemed worried.

I simply had to go ashore that night with him, so we went to the nearest town in spite of the cold and rain, and saw "Flying Fortress" at the local pictures – not a bad show. Col found when he got away that he'd lost his pay book, so we dashed back & luckily the Manager had it O.K. Strangely enough said Manager used to live at Neutral Bay – small world eh! With the weather here what it is, with continual wetness underfoot, I'm terribly glad I bought that pair of zippered rubber boots in New York – they're certainly envied by all onboard.

Washing clothes is a bit of a problem at present owing to the prevailing conditions, & to eke out my collars, I've placed an order for paper collars at 2/6 per doz. which can be thrown away after being worn a couple of times. Starch is practically unobtainable here, and I left a full packet at Flinders.

Well Mother darling, that's about the issue – my time is fairly well taken up these days with work, & as well as that I have to work in a good few letters. In the last few days I've written to Merle, Tom & also Percy, and by keeping late hours I've been able to read the book "Mortal Storm" which was very good – recommend it to Bubs if she hasn't already seen it – it's the sort of book she laps

[1] JIM: Who used to work in the Bank at Charing Cross

up. I suppose the Marrises are very naturally interested in my letters, & though I'd like to write them a separate letter, please tell them that I just can't squeeze the time, & in any case it would contain just the same as yours, so for the little tiddly bits, they'll have to wait until they see me. Give all the folks, Tanners, Kellands, & Chalk(s) my best regards, and also cheerio to Aunty Maud and all your Buffet "girls". Look after yourself Mum, & never have a minutes worry about –

Your loving son,
Jim.

Letter No. 9

S.5294 J. F. Yeomans - R.A.N.
Same address.
11th January, 1943

Dearest Mother,

As you will notice from time to time I try to vary my note paper, thus giving you some tangible evidence of the different places I've been. I have refrained up till now from using the above letter head as it is the usual rule to let a certain time elapse before mentioning stopping places etc. The town above, "Grand Junction" will always have a soft spot in our hearts because of the wonderful way we were treated there. Those American "Westerners" were the soul of hospitality, made a great fuss over us & simply wouldn't let us pay for anything. The whole state of Colorado is really outstanding, and the scenery is constantly changing. Grand Junction is very close to the "Grand Mesa Mountain" which is the highest table-top mountain in the world, being about 13,000 ft., & it's an inspiring sight. Naturally I used my camera quite a lot & hope to see the results in a short time, as Mrs. Stanghan's brother Ken is arranging to get them done for me.

However, back to the present... it is now or will be, should I say, some time since I stopped the fortnightly allotment to you, but I hope you understood the cable I sent at the same time advising of it. When I learnt that it was possible to stop it, I did so, because that £2.10.0 just remaining in my account over here will earn 12/6 exchange each time, and that seems an easy way of earning extra money, and I'll take it out when I get back & just slap the lot into the bank in a lump sum. I'm sure you'll see that I did right - if you should by any chance need some cash, you can always draw on the amount already in the joint account.

Biggest event since our mail arrived on January 1st, was today when I received no less than 3 parcels from Aussie. One from N.S.T. & ~~one~~ *TWO* from the R'wick Ladies & I'll write immediately & thank them. Altogether it was quite a good bag & I now have jam, Minties, gum asparagus & fruit salad to eat as well as the non-eatable contents like hankies, boot polish etc. I suppose they'll all go fast enough but will be enjoyable while they last.

As I told you before, we're nowhere near starved here, but meals with tinned fruit, and bread with jam, are not frequent occurrences. The lads talk about the steaks they're going to eat when we get back, but my fancy just now is for a couple of nice "malteds" & some nice Navel oranges. One thing that I do like is the bread - no white bread is allowed in England, & I much prefer the standard brown loaf. I don't know if "spuds" are still scarce at home, but I'm sure England could send potatoes in the ships as ballast & never miss them. The people here are exhorted to eat more spuds & brussell sprouts which are also plentiful, & which I like better than cabbage.

I managed to get leave Saturday afternoon just after dinner, & made the tedious journey up to London - the train stopping at all stations. After checking into my room at Victoria League Club, I accepted an invite to go up to the Royal Empire Society in Northumberland Ave. for an afternoon tea dance. It was just off Trafalgar Square, & I noticed the children playing at the pond there - breaking pieces of ice off the top & skidding them across the pond to the grave danger of the passers-by & the Trafalgar pigeon fanciers.

The building the "Society" is housed in is quite a magnificent affair, but their afternoon tea darnce was just a wee bit too formal for me, but I stayed there & nattered politely to people as I had time to kill before meeting my girl for the night. She turned up at 6.30 at the appointed place and we went to a well-known place called "Fischers" to dine & dance. The price was inclined to be steep, but we got a good table right on the floor & close to the band, which incidentally was very good, and I enjoyed the evening as the whole crowd there seemed light-hearted and in a good mood, added to which the orchestra was obliging & breaks between dances weren't long. It finished at 10 o'clock as do most affairs over here, and I saw the girl to her Tube station, but not home as Tube trains don't run late, and buses pack up even earlier - usually very few buses after 10 p.m. I got back to the "Club" quite early & had a nice drop of cocoa before turning in.

By 9 a.m. I was awake, had a hot bath and just managed to get down in time for breakfast which is not served later than 9.45. As an experiment to test my knowledge of London, I walked all the way from Edgeware Road, right up by Marble Arch, Oxford Street, Bond Street, Piccadilly and the Strand to Australia House, & found my way almost without assistance. I had a light lunch there with Ted Goodacre, the seaman I was telling you about who comes from

Cudal, and then we decided we must go see Madame Tussaud's Exhibition of Waxworks. After a little confusion as regards taking the right "Tube" & changing at the right places, we lobbed at Baker Street Station & found our way to the Exhibition which is in a really classy building, & is very well patronised & the "ante" was a little above what I expected.

However, we bought a souvenir guide each & started in to eye off the wax effigies of all kinds of famous people, past & present, ranging from Kings, statesmen & Generals to film stars, sportsmen and explorers. Australia is quite well represented, of course by our "Don", Kingsford Smith looking very casual with one hand in his trousers pocket, R.G. Menzies & the only speed-motor-cyclist there was an Aussie "Bluey" Wilkinson, complete with track model motor cycle, which is just an example of the thoroughness of the exhibits. All the poses are very natural, & in particular, I expected to see Teddy, Duke of Windsor, & wife Wally, wink at me any moment. Just to make things more confusing, there are wax figures in Commissionaire's uniform scattered around in appropriate places, & its not unusual for people to ask them for directions. Several times, I had to look very carefully to make sure which people were living & which were wax. The "Chamber of Horrors" is a separate section for which another charge had to be paid - its quite effectively staged, with quite authentic weapons etc. such as the guillotine being the actual one that beheaded Marie Antoinette - however, I must be a bit too stolid because I was a little disappointed in its horror qualities, but perhaps there is no pleasing everybody.

Ted & I took to the Tube once again, & this time found our way back to Aussie House without a hitch. There was a tea dance on there which wasn't TOO bad in spite of the uninspiring presence of the "great" man, Stanley Melbourne Bruce who danced with gay abandon with Mrs. Bruce & sundry other partners. My evening was enlivened by a girl in the uniform of the English WAAF's, but wearing "Australia" shoulder patches & it appears that she is originally a Manly girl, who happened to be in England with her family on a holiday when War was declared. By the way, we have been forbidden to wear our "Australia" badges on either overcoat or jacket, "because it isn't uniform" & naturally we're pretty hostile, but can't do a thing about it. In addition, we now wear the Navy Blue caps same as the R.N. I kept a pretty close guard on the WAAF during the dance, & before the close, had added her to my address book - name is Lyn Creed. By the way, Ted Goodacre couldn't get a bed in London that night, so I smuggled him into the Club & we slept "heads & tails"

- must both have been tired because we slept till 6 a.m. when I got my call to catch 6.40 train.

That's all this time Mum – everything is O.K. with me & if there is any worrying to be done, let me do it. I'm looking forward to your next letters, and until then much love

From your fond son,
Jim.

Letter No. 10

S.5294 Writer J. F. Yeomans, R.A.N.
C/o Naval Liaison Officer,
"Australia House",
The Strand, LONDON.
18th January, 1943

Dearest Mother,

No sooner have I typed the above than the sirens wail heralding the arrival of our old "friend" Jerry so I'll let you know how we get on later.
....Just standing by for the minute - interruption - tea being brought in by a kind friend is thrown all over me as he trips and I have to change wet clothing. As I said before, I'm allowed off temporarily as our friend isn't in our vicinity just now - the only thing I dislike about the business is that it keeps me out of my hammock. Last night we had a little innocent fun in this manner and were rousted out twice and were a little bit hostile on the second occasion, and I heard friend Jerry called some very nasty names that I won't repeat.

I'll now continue my letter as I intended to write it. Firstly there has been no more mail from home but last Friday I was extremely pleased to be presented with the parcel you sent. I must compliment you on the way you did it up and apparently you were determined that nothing would be pinched out of it because I had the devil's own job myself to open the tin, finally borrowing a tin opener for the purpose as the lid was too securely soldered for other measures. At anyrate I had my reward when it was opened and that very afternoon cut half of it and shared it with the Royal Navy chaps who are at present sharing my office, and they all said the usual highly complimentary remarks about your culinary art. I agree with them this time at anyrate Mum, because it was lovely and fruity, and not in the least bit dry. I'm keeping the other half until I go ashore - there's just a chance that I may get over to North Wales next week-end, and if so, I'm sure my little friend over there will also appreciate your cooking, because for this country, it is an extremely "rich" cake. The other contents of the tin were also very handy.

One afternoon last week, my Petty Officer friend who was the Capt. of

the hockey team in Melb. tore me away from my work, not very reluctantly, and I had a game of hockey on a neighbouring field. We only had a scratch game with 5 men per team and of course there was a lot of running about to do, which at this stage is all to the good, because I really don't get as much exercise as I could wish. The tough part was when we returned onboard to find the hot water "off" and rather than remain sweaty I was a Spartan and had a COLD shower, which was effective but NOT enjoyable. (All Clear just went - hope Jerry doesn't come again to-night!)

Talking about that shower reminds me that I had my second swim in this country on Saturday. Two other lads and I got all rugged up, and looking very foolish conspicuously carrying towels, we walked to the nearest indoor Baths and indulged in an enjoyable swim. Being out of condition, I didn't do too much and so felt O.K. afterwards and not dizzy & light headed as I was after my first swim over here some time back. I must try to go over more often, especially as they want us to form a water polo team from the ship, but its a bit hard to get in the mood. On the walk over I noticed with ever-fresh astonishment, some of the hard manual labour jobs that women are doing over here. There's no doubt about the ladies pulling their weight in England - they seem to be able to tackle anything.

I'm enclosing something that I really meant to send weeks ago - its the negative of a photo of Mr. & Mrs. Marris taken by her sister when they were "courting" years ago - its a back view, but I can recognize them even from the neg. Get "Kookaburra Snapshots" to print it, and then show it to them and see what they say - Mrs. Marris' dress alone will be worth seeing. See if they can remember when and where it was taken.

By the way, before I left I don't think I informed "Selfridges" of any change of address, so will you write them and ask for all correspondence to be sent to Randwick. There may possibly be a divvy soon, and if there is, you might pop it into my bank account.

That seems to be the lot for now Mother dear - I'm writing to you and the girls pretty frequently and to Percy occasionally, and hope they are all getting through alright - I'd hate to think of wasting time on mail that doesn't reach you. I'm still very much O.K. - only defection is a small piece out of my forehead, caused by colliding with a part of the ship in the black-out, but that sort

of thing is liable to happen to any “small child”.

Fondest love – your affectionate son,
Jim.

Letter No. 11

S.5294
Writer J. F. Yeomans
c/o Naval Liaison Officer,
"Australia House",
The Strand,
LONDON.
26th Jan., 1943

Dearest Mother,

Today is rather an appropriate occasion to write "home" it being of course "Australia Day" - not that it seems unlike any other day to us over here. Also I'm pleased to report receiving your letter No. 3, but at the same time must sternly reprimand you for putting 2/1 worth of stamps on that letter in direct contradiction to my instructions to use penny mail. It grieves me horribly to see the cold blooded murder of 2/- because it doesn't get here a day quicker than ordinary mail - I just had a brilliant idea - every letter you write, use the 1d. stamp and put the 2/- away and we'll use it to celebrate my return. Probably I'll send you a cable to the effect of not using airmail when I get an opportunity and hope you'll understand what I mean by it.

As you say in your letter that you miss my weekly screed as of old, it will no doubt please you to think that I am now writing once per week and you should get them very regularly now. By now you should have received everything I wrote on the way across and also my earliest letters from here, and I'm very much looking forward to seeing your comments about them. By the way this typewriter is very "nasty" so excuse please any mistakes.

I already knew about the upsetting time you were going through on account of Merle's babe through Bub's letter which arrived last Thursday. I sincerely hope by now that he has been successfully treated and will be a healthy, happy little boy when I come home. Naturally I was surprised to read of Aunty Ida taking a new spouse, but in a way have often half expected it. As yet I haven't received the Sunday papers you speak of sending and hope they arrive Okay because I'm looking forward to them very much. Papers over here are very

fiddling affairs these days and are simply a repeat of the news over the radio, and the daily papers consist of just a double sheet. Haven't yet seen any parcel from Church as you mentioned, but it may come later perhaps. Speaking of parcels, I was very surprised to receive a nice cake from Mrs. Marris's sister Mrs. Cubbin so that was good of her wasn't it. I'm keeping in touch with her by letter, but don't know whether I'll see her again, unless of course we should happen to sail in there later on. You told me to visit some places of historic interest for you and as you know by now, I did that on my first leave. It speaks much for the way I've got used to the country when I say that I'm actually accustomed to finding places with "stories or a past" without specially looking for them, but all my experience is soaking in and without setting myself to tell you about them, I'll probably just say something about them in the course of many future conversations and after all to have an unlimitable store of little reminiscences and anecdotes for ordinary talk is more the mark of the traveller than the man who sets himself up to lecture a probably bored audience.

While writing my last letter, you will have noticed that I was disturbed by "sky visitors" and we had several alerts during the week - as much as 6 on one night, but apart from making us lose some beauty sleep he did very little harm. The people over here make it quite clear that they will put up with the inconvenience of such visitors as long as the R.A.F. repay calls.

By much organisation, pleading, patience and promises, I managed to go on leave midday Friday and set out to visit my friends in North Wales, being careful to take the necessary food ration tickets with me, and also personal contributions from my Australian parcels, including half your Xmas cake. Taking that trip was just the same as you setting out to visit Harden just for a weekend, but somehow or other, distance seems to mean nothing to me these days and away I went with just a vague idea of my times of commencing and arriving. You mustn't imagine that it was as simple as going from Sydney to Harden because I had to chop and change several times.

Firstly I had to get up to London, and once there had to go to Euston Station where I managed to catch the train with about 10 minutes to spare. It wasn't a really slow train, nor was it really fast and I was glad enough when I got to my next stop which was Crewe. I had to wait 1½hours there and luckily there was a Church Army canteen on the platform where I was able to have a couple of sandwiches and tea. Finally the train got going and reaching Chester,

I had to alight again because it went through the station I wanted. Again I had another wait, this time 3/4 hour, and knowing me, you can imagine that I was wringing my hands by that time and almost ready to start on foot. Eventually, as trains do, this one came along and plodded along to my destination. From the station I had about 1½miles to walk and it says a lot for my navigation that I finally found the house, because by then it was nearly 10 o'clock. My girl-friend was waiting for me - the others had gone out and she was just beginning to give me up for lost. While she was cooking a chop for me, the others returned and I produced your Xmas cake and there were a lot of comments about the amount of fruit and its richness. Actually I got only two pieces of your cake (which of course I did enjoy) but it was worth while seeing the delighted way these people waffled it. We sat up talking almost all night, & it seems since last time they have been swotting up books on Australia and had a lot to ask me and could appreciate more fully what I told them about the best country in the world.

During my stay, I satisfied my curiosity about many things, just little things but interesting to me. For example - their home is a semi-detached two story place but really small. However, it is quite an average place for over here and I was a little surprised to learn that the rent is only 12/4 per week - suppose it would be at least double that at home. However, there aren't really many things over here that are any cheaper than we can get them so I'm afraid they can't interest me in becoming a resident over here.

Saturday was not a day I like to talk about - frankly the weather was lousy, and I stayed in practically all day. After tea or should I say supper, Dean and I battled along to the local dance which was simply packed. However, I certainly enjoyed myself and Dean is an excellent dancer. People over here must be pretty observant, because a couple of completely strange girls I danced with remembered seeing me previously - Aussies are looked on as glamour boys over here as a rule, being fairly scarce, and always excite more comment than the other Dominion's services or the Yanks. On the way home, we called in on friends of Dean and brought them along with us for late supper and I provided the treat out of my parcels. It was the first time Dean had ever had asparagus which we had on toast, and she also wanted to know what the little black passion-fruit "pips" were in the tin of fruit salad. I also provided Nestles cream so it was quite a feast.

Sunday morning I had my breakfast brought to me in bed and its a lovely

experience to be able to lay in and really be lazy. The weather wasn't too badly and I actually had a glimpse of blue sky a couple of times and of course I had to chip them about what an Australian sky would look like at this time of the year. It was amusing to watch them when I spoke about fruit etc. we used to grow in Harden and several varieties we get at home are absolutely unknown here - for example quinces, nectarines, persimmons and loganberries. At dinner they asked me what I would like and tried their best to please with the result that I couldn't eat it all which offended them or so they said. There was quite a lot of meat, brussell sprouts and potatoes were simply piled up and the Yorkshire pudding was terribly filling and we had a nice rice pudding after that. At tea-time they asked for suggestions for the meal and were delighted with my idea of pancakes. I fell for the job of mixing the paste, cooking them and then bravely tossed them. Luckily I caught the knack straight away and began to show off with some high and fancy tossing on the subsequent ones - all landed safely!

At 8.30 I grabbed my bag and said goodbye with very genuine regret, in my hurry foolishly forgetting the sandwiches they had so thoughtfully cut for my return trip. Dean went to the bus stop with me and I had to run for it and waved to her from the back platform - they only run every hour. Had to get the bus all the way to Chester as trains had stopped running for the night by then. Had to wait an hour in Chester and kept walking up & down the platform to keep warm - I wasn't game to sit down as I would have dozed off straight away. However the train came eventually and I slept till we got to Crewe which is not very much further on and there I had more waiting to do in the cold most unfortunately. As soon as the train pulled in, I made a dive and thus wasn't one of the unfortunates who had to stand all the way to London. I got into a 1st class compartment and was soon asleep - not waking till we were almost in. I was a little embarrassed to find that I was sprawled all over the chap sitting next to me, but I think he was pretty unconscious too. It was about 5 a.m. when we arrived in and I then had to wait till 5.30 when the Tube began running & took me to the station where I caught the train back to the ship. Altogether you can see it was a pretty exhausting trip but was well worth it and maybe I'll do it again before long if I can manage. Don't worry about me falling too hard for Dean though - I will admit it's to see her that I make the trip, but I'm still your hard-headed boy Mother and when you get, that is if you get a daughter-in-law, I think I can promise you a dinkum Australian.

Had another letter yesterday from Elsie Newsway, Betty's cousin in Cardiff

inviting me to call there anytime I can, but that remains to be seen later. Got dragged away from work this afternoon at 4 o'clock for a game of hockey and everyone seemed intent on making me the target with a resultant large number of cuts and bruises. However, I can take a joke and I am beginning to get into decent condition at last, so won't go to seed through lack of exercise. Believe we might have a match with a R.N. establishment this coming week-end, and we should be able to field a fair team by then.

By the way, I'm enclosing a photo of self that was taken only recently and you can see I look O.K. in spite of my serious look & you'll note the blue cap replacing the usual white top - show anyone that may be interested.

Bubs can expect a letter almost immediately in reply to hers. Give my regards to all & sundry,

Your loving son,
Jim.

"A lot of memories to look back on". Jim wearing RAN winter service dress, Jan. 1942 (Jim Yeomans).

Letter No. 12

S.5294
Writer J. F. Yeomans
c/o Naval Liaison Officer,
"Australia House",
LONDON.
6th Feb., 1943

Dearest Mother,

I delayed this letter a little as there was a "buzz" that some Aussie mail was in. A little did trickle onboard, but there was none at all for me, so here goes once again. Sorry I made a slip there - I did get one letter which intrigued me a great deal until I opened it. The address was "Signaller J. Yeomans" & it was addressed to the name of the ship and upon opening I was very surprised to find it was from Tom's eldest boy Peter. Funny thing for the kid to write to me at all, & Lord knows what he put in it, but apparently the censor didn't approve, because there is more hole than writing. I'll drop young Pete a line c/o Ray Ave. in a few days. As a matter of interest, his letter was dated 20 November.

By the way, I hope you received my last letter, No. 11, because I enclosed a recent photo of myself in it and wouldn't like it to go astray. I weighed myself this week, and fully dressed go 11 stone 3 lbs. Just about exactly the same as when I was home, so the life over here is not hurting me at anyrate, and by reason of a fair amount of hockey I don't think there is much fat to be taken into account.

You will be glad to hear that friend Jerry has given us the go-by for the last week or so, and its nice to be able to anticipate a full night's sleep. Lord only knows, we get up early enough at any time, actually speaking hours before dawn, although that doesn't speak so much of early rising as it would at home. However, I can assure you that the cold morning air makes the old hammock very desirable. Last night I changed my hammock for the first time since leaving Aussie, and it was really filthy. Its a darned nuisance them being white, because they get dirty or at least show the dirt long before the fellows who got issued with brown hammocks.

Some of my papers arrived last week, and I found out that I actually didn't pass my exam. for Leading Writer that time at Flinders. There was some controversy about it at the time, but when I left I was assured that I was Okay. That means that I will have to start swotting again, and I'll have another lash at it when our Australian Paymaster Commander comes onboard - if I pass then, it should be only a short time before I'm made - the big trouble still being the fact of waiting a turn on the advancement roster. If & when I do get "made", I'll send you a cable so that you'll know to address my letters correctly. The extra cash would be very handy right now too, as well as the privileges.

On Wednesday this week I had an invitation to play hockey for the "MEN" representing several ships against the "OFFICERS" of the same ships. We went to a beautiful hockey field in a nearby town to play and it wasn't a bad match - some of the players had played in peacetime for very prominent teams, & I believe the Captain of the Officers team was an International. In spite of that, my team won by about 4 goals to nil. Once again I collected a bash on the shin, and now both shins are decorated with sticking plaster and bandage, and I get them dressed daily. I don't really think the Sick Bay Attendant approves of me playing hockey, as it means work for him. However, I'm glad to say that I'm in pretty fair condition and my wind is good still, so that's the way I want to keep.

Thursday afternoon I had to rush up to London on official "business" and having completed that, I had the night free. This time I stayed at the Empire Services Club at Victoria, quite near the station and it is very convenient, and an even better club than the one at Marble Arch. I shared my room with one of our airman - a lad from Perth. Rang up one of my London girl-friends and being free that night she had dinner with me and then went to a dance. She wanted to eat at Lyons Corner House at Piccadilly (Mr. Marris would probably know it) but there was a big queue already waiting because it is a very nice place with moderate charges - as you know, I'm too impatient to tolerate queues so bowled into the "Winston Hotel" - the restaurant is know as D'Auberge de France. There was no delay in service there, but the food was very ordinary and the charge! Just the mere 15/- for two, and there wasn't even dancing. The maximum price for a meal is supposed to be 5/-, but they get around it with Service charges etc. Needless to say, I did NOT tip the waiter.

We went to the dance at Covent Garden, and as always, it was quite enjoyable The girl lives at Chelsea, once looked upon as a very Bohemian locality, but

I'm told that all the artists and screwballs shifted out when the blitz came. By a bit of bad luck, I just missed the last train back, but fortunately Victoria is only two stops from South Kensington where I took her, so I started to walk. On my way, I overtook a big tall chap in a black homburg hat, & enquired if I was on the right track. He said he was going part of the way so I fell in step with him. I didn't say anything about being a stranger or anything like that, but he said "you sound like an Australian". He then told me that he spent a year in Aussie in 1930 & we had quite a chat. He'd certainly been around as he mentioned being in places from Perth to Rockhampton - I've got an idea that guessing his profession as Acting wouldn't be far wrong. He left me at Sloane Square, & I had a fair idea of how to proceed from there, but after getting a little distance decided to ask a chap to be sure. However, he beat me to the punch & as I got near him, he said - "Pardon - Victoriah pliz". I correctly judged him to be a Frenchmen & trusting to my sense of direction took him in tow. I soon found that he knew absolutely no English, so I wracked my brains for any French I could remember & we had a very enjoyable if incoherent "conversation" until we got there. I ummed & ahhed a lot when I was talking, & then as soon as he understood what I meant, he'd answer like a flash, & I'd be trying to pick out a couple of words, so that I could gather the gist of the sentence. We parted very cordially with "Merci Monsieur - bonsoir" & friendly handshake.

While I was in London I tried several times to get in touch with Ken Bracey, Mrs. Stanghan's brother by phone, so that I could make final arrangements about obtaining delivery of my photos which by the way cost £2.5. to have done. I posted him the amount in Postal Notes & hope the long awaited photos arrive soon. In his letter, he said that the ones taken in New York and England were quite good, but the other ones taken in America weren't the best which is rather a pity. These were taken on the film I started when I was home, & remember I failed to expose the film at Percy's place, but perhaps some light got in it somehow - but I shall know more when I actually see the snaps.

If I possibly can, I'll get a letter away to Merle tonight, and you can tell Bubs that I'll be writing her next week. You might tell her that I scrounged an Official "Theatre guide of London" which may be of interest to her to see the current plays that are running & who are in them, and will include it with my next letter to her. In the various plays, revues & musical comedies on now there are lots of names well-known even at home but I don't go for that sort of thing much, & anyway the prices are monstrous. Among the players you may know are:-

Ivor Novello, Diana Wynyard, Anton Walbrook, Robertson Hare, Constance Cummings, Vivien Leigh, Bobbie Howes, Arthur Askey, Jack Buchanan, Jack Hulbert & Cicely Courtneidge, Tommy Trinder, Frances Day, Sybil Thorndyke, Jessie Matthews, Frank Leighton, Stanley Holloway, Robert Morley, Lupino Lane, & Leslie Henson. The majority of them have all been in a picture at some time or another.

That's all the news for this time Mother dear, but there aren't a great many things can happen in one week, & I do well to use up the space I do, I believe that a parcel for each & every man onboard has been received from the Australian Comforts Fund - our "Xmas presents" - but all donations are thankfully accepted. Cheerio for now Mum and look after yourself & don't worry about me. Just by the by, no Sunday papers have arrived for me as yet, so I hope you are sending them, because I'm very much looking forward to reading up all the old news.

Till next time, Your loving son,
Jim.

P.S. Parcel from St. Marys Church turned up O.K. Will you tell them "thanks".
J.

Letter No. 13

S.5294
Writer J. F. Yeomans
c/o Naval Liaison Officer,
H.M.A. London Depot, "Australia House",
The Strand, LONDON.
15.2.43.

Dearest Mother,

Your letter No. 4 started on 5th December and completed on 14th arrived on Saturday morning and I was very pleased to see it too! As yet it is the latest dated letter that I have received but once again I want to emphasise the fact that even the 2/1 in stamps doesn't ensure Air Mail because there are other chaps who have received later letters with just the 1d. mail. Too bad that only one from me had arrived at the date of writing and I hope that since then they have been rolling in fairly regularly because I know how disappointing it is when the mail seems to have "dried up". However, it's good to see that you were officially informed that I had arrived safely and I'm sure that must have been good news for you.

Apparently Merle has been having a lot of chopping and changing lately and I think I know the place where Cyril would be working having been past it a couple of times in my travels. I'm surprised that you don't mention anything about Ray's condition, but hope that the omission of any reference to him means that he is progressing favourably. All the family seem to be having their troubles and perhaps it will teach Percy a lesson not to play with those rough boys at Langridges after getting a cracked rib and I hope that by this time he is once more whole & hearty. As usual I see you have been the Good Samaritan, this time to Uncle Perce - from the tone of your letter, Aunty Pol must have been very low, but I'd say even on your evidence that there would be a good chance even now of her being once more on her feet.

I notice that you say not to buy anything for the family & I only hope no-one will be greatly disappointed if I don't bring home a few odds and ends as curiosities, but actually there is very little I could buy over here that we couldn't

get at home and apart from that prices are not very tempting. However, if I see anything worth while carting along I'll get it - so far, apart from tiny souvenirs that wouldn't mean a great deal to anyone but myself, I've only managed to pick up a couple of novelties in the way of bridge scorers that I thought you might like - nothing worth writing home about, but I just thought I'd mention it in passing. By now I guess you will have heard that I spent my Xmas quite happily with Stanghans and by now I'm getting quite used to the English scheme of seasons with Summer appearing in June, but I do know that I've missed my Aussie summer with the opportunities for surfing. Even so, I still would just as soon be here as Melbourne - I suppose that will make Merle snort if she hears about it, but its not real bad over here.

Glad to hear that Mr. Tanner is having fun playing the piano at dances and please give he and Mrs. T. my best regards. Tell him that I spent a bit of time in London last week-end with his young friend Kevin Day.

To my experienced eye, this looks to be a terribly badly set out letter, so I hope my Mother's eyes are not too critical. With your letter on Saturday came one that you had re-addressed and also a "Newsletter" from the Association of Accountants and they mention a parcel, so I am now very greedily awaiting its appearance. Went up to London on Saturday afternoon and trotted around to Aussie House to see if there was any further mail for me. To my delight, I found one in Bub's hand-writing so carefully put it away, intending to read it in the Tube while on my way out to meet the "girl-friend". I really don't think you can imagine how I felt upon opening it to find two pages of drawings by young Bob - it positively rocked me and I feverishly hunted through the envelope for a covering note by Bubs but they were quite alone - anyone observing me must have been struck by the blank look on my dial. Seems terribly funny to think of the kid's drawings coming all of 13,000 miles - they are quite good for Bob's age, but somehow it seemed nothing less than tragic to me, in the midst of a "mail famine" I should actually get a letter, with not a thing to read in it - I don't think I'll ever forget opening that letter.

As per appointment, I met my girl Joan at South Kensington station and just for a change she was first there - luckily I was only about 3 minutes late so got off with a caution. We went back to Leicester Square and queued up as is usual outside the "Warner Theatre" and after about 15 minutes wait got in to see the picture "Casablanca" which wasn't too bad.

After that we had dinner at Lyon's Corner House, and as I had been told found the charges reasonable and the food quite good. What struck me as very funny was the waiter putting the menu in front of us, and then telling us what we could have - nothing that was actually shown on the menu, which I suspect is simply a pre-war relic.

I was staying at the Victoria League Club again - Hopkinson House near Victoria Station and that night I had a lovely sleep waking at 9.25. The Regulation is "no breakfasts served after 9.30" and you should have seen me pull trousers & coat over pajamas, twist scarf round neck, comb hair and dash along trying to look as if I'd been up for hours. The most important thing however, is that I did get breakfast. Then I went back & undressed again and lolled in a nice hot bath, got dressed again and then joined Kev. Day and another of our seamen and also an Airman from Mackay, Queensland. We walked along to Westminster Abbey and Parliament House where I took a couple of photos and then along the embankment, where one of the others took a photo of me sitting between the paws of the Sphinx that guards Cleopatra's Needle - it is the original of the one in Elizabeth St. opposite Bathurst St. - the difference is that the one here is just 3,500 years old.

Standing on the steps of "Australia House" in the Strand, I took a couple more photos including the famous London "Law Courts" which are right along-side the old Church "St. Clement Dane" - remember it was made memorable in that kiddies game "Oranges & lemons, the bells of St. Clements". Unfortunately this lovely old church was one of the Nazi victims & was completely burnt out leaving just the stone shell standing.

We had lunch in the Boomerang Club and then the airman & I had a quiet game of billiards until it was time for me to think about popping out to Joan's home at Chelsea, so I grabbed a bus and arrived there at about 2.40, met her people, had a cup of tea and then she wheeled me off to have a look around parts of London I hadn't seen. No doubt you will recall reading in many books about "Soho" so I got her to take me through there. Actually it just reminded me of East Sydney district round William Street and Palmer Street except there are a large number of foreign cafes with their gaudy signs hung out and I'll bet not many of them are authentic.

Getting out of the Soho district, we walked along Oxford Street, which

was terribly crowded with people window shopping. One of the biggest shops was "Selfridges, London Ltd." comparable with say Farmers, but in a more imposing building. The only other store I've seen that had a really impressive building was "Peter Jones" - quite a modern place, with a lot of glass used in the upper stories. From there we went down to Marble Arch and entered the (I was nearly going to say "Domain") Hyde Park and looking at all the people milling around, and the soap-box orators there, it was very reminiscent of the "Dom". After passing through "Mayfair" we again made tracks for Chelsea where I had tea, and then we went to the dance at Covent Garden which was terribly packed. I'd wanted to go to Hammersmith Palais, but it's necessary to be a member to get in to these Sunday dances - I had a card for Covent Garden, but not Hammersmith Palais. I intend to pop out there for a dance one of these days though.

Back to the ship very early this morning and as usual, no lack of work. By the way, I have an invitation to spend next week-end with Ken Bracey, Mrs. Stang's brother and if I can get leave will go out. He has had my films developed for me, but I haven't been able to get them as yet & am very much looking forward to sighting them. With a bit of luck I might get some more Aussie mail this week & at anyrate I'm hoping. I'm a bit surprised that there hasn't been a letter from Goody yet, but I suppose there are so many things that can happen between despatch & receipt of a single letter. I hope that I remembered to tell her my address before I left!

Well Mum, that's all for now - I'm still keeping in good health and in view of the good news we have been hearing from all fronts lately I feel very chirpy and optimistic of getting back to civvie life very soon. By the way, it was just 2 years on Saturday since I volunteered as a Writer - can't decide whether it seems ages or only just recently.

Cheerio for now, much love from your fond son,
Jim.

Letter No. 14

S.5294
Writer J. F. Yeomans
c/o Naval Liaison Officer,
"Australia House",
LONDON.
23rd February, 1943.

Dearest Mother,

This is the second letter of yours marked "No. 4" that I have to reply to - this one was started on the 22nd November and finished on 28th November, so I assume you've got your numbers mixed. You should take a leaf out of my book and keep a "correspondence register" so that you can check up on things of that nature. Well Mum, in spite of said letter having been written earlier than the previous one I received, I was very pleased to see it, though once again will reiterate my comment that 2/ld. in stamps doesn't help them get here quicker than the 1d. post. Its too bad for me to have to read about all the lovely surfing weather that is going to waste back home when I would love just a bit of the sunny warmth, but I'm preparing you now for the fact that for months after this biz is over, you're going to have a lazy, loafing but very brown skinned son kicking around the house.

Glad to hear that Mrs. Tracey received and liked the cloth you worked, and it's good to know that you are corresponding with her, and I'm sure you'd get on well together if you actually met. I have expected to receive a note from one of the Traceys but none as yet.

Shakes up my ideas a little when you mention selling my civvie blue suit - however as you probably know, its one of my many faults that I hate parting with things. As far as I'm concerned, I suppose that suit had done its dash and £1.15 isn't too bad really - just the same, lay off those grey suits, I want something to wear without having to indulge in an orgy of buying.

Notice that once again you have included the address of Mrs. Stanghan, but I guess you know all about my finding her from previous letters. However

it might interest you to see what she looks like these days, so I'm enclosing a photo I took of her at the door of her house "Kiama" in Luton.

By the way, the letter of yours I'm replying to had company - one from Mr. & Mrs. Marris containing a Xmas card, just a trifle late, but I have already replied thanking them for it. Also a letter from Bubs to which I will probably reply tomorrow and the December "Newsletter" from the Association of Accountants, which I really appreciate now. I also had a small parcel from them the same day containing a couple of blocks of chocolate & a Xmas pudding wrapped up in a "Smiths" and a "Pix" - all very welcome! A letter from Merle dated 23rd December arrived last week and in it Merle informed me about Aunty Poll having passed on. There was also a letter postmarked "Sydney" in unfamiliar handwriting which intrigued me greatly, until upon opening same I found it contained a tiny greeting card from the big boss at N.S.T. - none other than R.M. Davies... he is also a trifle late and if he expects acknowledgment he can go on expecting indefinitely. Mail from Aussie is pretty scarce and also very irregular, but I don't do too badly from my correspondents over here, and as a rule it is seldom that 3 days go past without me having mail from someone or other, and it all helps to keep me happy.

Of late, my work has eased off somewhat although I anticipate a sharp increase shortly, but it will be time to worry when that actually happens. In the meantime I have been taking advantage of my leisure to wander over to a nearby canteen after working hours, and have a game of billiards or snooker, something that I troubled very little about until I came over here. The weather hasn't been propitious lately so its a couple of weeks since I last played hockey, which is just as well in a way, as one of my shins particularly was in pretty bad shape and kept me calling at the Sick Bay for some weeks. Its pretty right just now however, but I still have vivid memories of Garth Ryan's earlier troubles - how's he going now by the way as a family man?

The last few days I have felt very lost without one of my best pals - my wrist watch. It knocked off work one night and I've left it in the hands of one of our technical officers and am hoping for the best. Its impossible to get repairs done ashore, but I hate being without it - makes me miserable!

At last the photos Ken Bracey had done for me arrived, and it was a real pleasure to look them over. Apart from their significance to me, they are quite

a high standard just judged by photographic standards and they've been very well printed too. About 90 of them are quite hot stuff and I'm sure will be of great interest when I begin to show them off back home. The two photos I took at the front gate - one of you alone, & one of you & Bubs came out very clearly and its nice for me to have them at hand. I'll be sure glad the next time I push that gate open, although I'm afraid it won't be just yet a-while. The photos I took throughout my trip in the States are particularly pleasing to me, and the ones of Chester, in the county of Cheshire, and Conway in the county of Flint, Wales will hold your attention. I've already mapped out where I intend to go if we should by chance get some more leave - its a place within easy reach of Stratford-on-Avon where Shakespeare lived and one of our lads has just been there and sings its praises very highly. (By the way someone has just slung a newspaper at me - one sent by you, so time out, while I rip off the wrapper. Had half hour spell while I scanned it - dated 22nd November, it contains details of the running of the Melbourne Cup and the order of finishing, the first time I've seen it. By the way, I forgot to tell you in my previous letter that two other papers arrived about a fortnight ago)

Last week-end I spent with Mrs. Stang's brother Ken Bracey and his wife at Welwyn Garden City in Hertfordshire, arriving there at 4 p.m. Saturday afternoon. It's really quite nice there - houses are neat looking, and yet it only needs 5 minutes walk to get into open countrified surroundings... you'd like it although I'm afraid I'd find it a little slow to LIVE there. At anyrate Ken & I had tea and then met his wife "Babs" on the way home from her work at the "Store". Most everybody over here works - believe Mrs. Stang will have to go into some sort of war factory soon, as they are weeding out the hat trade. We went to the local picture show and saw quite a good programme, Ronald Coleman, Cary Grant & Jean Arthur in "Talk of the Town" - good show and the support I'd never heard of before, Alan Mowbray in "The Devil & Hitler" - rather funny.

They let me sleep till 10.30 in the morn, for which I was duly grateful and then donning Ken's dressing gown, I had breakfast cooked by Babs. Ken took her bike and I rode his, and we pedalled several miles around the locality and apart from enjoying views etc. it was a great feeling to get out on the road again, and it was a beautiful sensation whizzing downhill through the freezing air and the cold air only made it more exhilarating. I'm afraid I made Ken move pretty solidly, because when we finished, although I was still "half-frozen" the sweat

was streaming off him. After that exercise, I certainly enjoyed dinner which included a very nice Yorkshire pudding.

Spent most of the afternoon putting records on their radio-gram and dozing in front of a lovely fire. It was putting them to too much trouble to stay Sunday night, as I would have to get up at about 3.30 in order to return to the ship in time, so instead I slept in London at a Club near Victoria Station and even at that it was necessary to be roused at 5.30 a.m.

At their house, I discovered an old American magazine called "Coronet" dated December, 1936 and it had a very good article called "Kangaroo Stew", written by an American visitor about Australia. Altogether he has made a really good summary of our doings and habits and life in general, a little tough on us in some respects, but written with a touch of humour, so I cut it out & sent it to my little friend in North Wales as I'm sure it will interest her quite a lot and would be more edifying than a dry encyclopaedia.

By the way, I have noticed two reviews on a book written by Aldous Huxley called "The Art of Seeing". It is apparent from their remarks that he is writing about the same system that I started, because one reviewer quotes the passage about "palming" and the other mentions "blinking". I won't have room for the complete clipping in this letter, so I'll enclose it with Bubs letter as she will also be interested and you might ask to see it too.

Well Mother, once again I can assure you, that my health is okay - I'm not starving altogether - I'm comparatively happy although this climate is enough to give anyone the jim-jams. Take things easy and look after yourself because I haven't found anyone over here who could in any way take your place with me. Cheerio to all our friends and our "tenants" - much love,

Your fond son,
Jim.

P.S. I learned only today that there is a "Randwick" over here in Worcestershire, quite near the district I want to visit. Must also look it over.

Letter No. 15

S.5294
Writer J. F. Yeomans
c/o Naval Liaison Officer,
"Australia House",
LONDON.
3rd March, 1943.

Dearest Mother,

Monday's mail brought me two letters from home - one from you and the other from Bubs, and I can tell you that I was mighty glad to see them too! Had to laugh to notice that you had marked this letter No. 4 - that makes the third letter No. 4 I've had from you - what hope have I got of ascertaining if one of your letters actually doesn't arrive. However, I'll forgive this little error because I realize that at that time you must have been pretty upset after being with Aunty Poll for her last couple of weeks.

I'm very glad to note that you received my 2nd and 3rd letters round Xmas time and it must have made me seem just a little bit closer to you. I can't imagine what it was that was snipped out of my 3rd letter because I'm usually a little short of news because of not mentioning anything that could possibly be censurable. Hope you are keeping my letters as it will be interesting for me to see just what happened to any that have been mutilated. Too bad my cable didn't get to you before Xmas, but that particular one must have taken almost a month, so that's pretty poor isn't it. I sent one to Bubs on the 15th Dec., but she doesn't mention it, so I guess didn't have it by then. By the way, I sent a number of Xmas cards to the family when I was in New York - did they arrive okay! As a joke and also to pique her curiosity I sent one from there to Gwenn Cubitt - I would have loved to have seen her face when she got it - wonder if the J.Read boy is still No.1.

Very pleased with friend Pinto and his Mother to think that they remembered you at Xmas - would hardly have thought Pinto would think of it, but I'm sure it pleased you. Nice to hear about this Nestles' chocolate you're sending me and I do hope they arrive intact. I fail to understand how Percy received

the letter I wrote to him two weeks before you got yours, because they would be sent from the same place at the same time. I haven't had a reply from Percy and hope he does eventually write, although I suppose he is a busy man. Bubs says in her letter that Neville is now wearing long pants and that certainly shakes me up - makes me feel "grown up" and yet I still can't think of myself other than just a "boy" and I don't suppose you can either.

Since writing to you last I haven't done anything of note, but at anyrate I will narrate what I can of recent happenings. Having heard good reports from the lads, I went ashore with three of our

———————————-

(I've changed typewriters, that other one is a terrible old thing)

———————————-

seamen to see Walt Disney's picture "Bambi" - as usual with Disney's pictures, the colour and cartooning was very clever, but seemed to me to be his weakest effort to date. (By the way, there is an Air Raid on just now, but I'm not duty so won't race up top unless it gets "hot". However, I'll just go see what goes on and come back to finish this letter if there's nothing interesting transpiring.) Nothing doing just now - let you know later if anything transpires.

Last Saturday afternoon, Petty Officer Abrahams whom you may remember captained the hockey team at Flinders, and I were invited to play for another ship's team, and we played an Army team on a local ground. Sad to relate they gave us a thrashing - I couldn't seem to get really comfortable, and a belt on the forehead in the second half didn't improve my play. I got a decent lump out of that which has now gone down, but I still bear a scab on the spot. Still, win or lose, it was still a "run" and that's the main thing.

I'm still going over for my occasional game of billiards, and really think I'm noticeably improving. Its a good way of passing time, and after the earlier difficulties of the game are mastered, it's quite fascinating to play. As it only costs 1d. a game for the lights, it will take a lot of play to ruin me.

(I've just been up top again - certainly Hell popping now - and is it COLD!)

My big boss came onboard this week - the R.A.N. Paymaster Commander - he's only a tiny chap, but seems "all for the boys" and is quite approachable and not hard to talk to. He is going to take me for my Leading rates examination

as soon as I think I know what' it's all about, so therefore I'll need to do a little steady swotting in the next week or so.

Went before the Commander this morning with my request for long week-end leave and had it granted and so this week-end I will again be accepting my standing invitation to make a visit to North Wales and I sincerely hope the weather is a little more clement than it is now.

Well Mum, that just about runs me dry I think - maybe I had something else to say, but the disturbance caused by the boy-friends "upstairs" may have caused me to forget. I'm just enjoying a very nice cup of hot tea now, and that reminds me that the sugar we use is the same as Percy uses - you know, that coarse stuff. Regards to all our friends and all my love.

Your affectionate son,
Jim.

Letter No. 17

S.5294
Writer J. F. Yeomans
c/o Naval Liaison Officer,
"Australia House",
The Strand,
LONDON.
21st March.

Dearest Mother,

My last letter to you was written whilst on leave in Canterbury and I hope it arrived okay. As usual on the Monday morning, I had to rise early in order to catch the train back to the ship, and since then things have been going much as usual and keeping me fairly busy.

I had understood that I would be sent up to London "on business" on Thursday and wishing to make the most of the trip, I arranged to meet a girl-friend of mine living in the city. Unfortunately, the official trip fell through, but I still had my "date" to keep, so went up to London on the Wednesday night, met the girl and had quite an enjoyable evening dancing. As ever, the worst part was having to leave the bed at the "Lion Club" before dawn in order to get back in time.

However, while I was in town, I trotted along to Aussie House and picked up the mail for the ship that was there. There was only the one for me, but I was very glad to find that it was yours dated 8th January - my latest so far. You've numbered it 5, which is a break after having had three number "4's"! In case you don't remember it was written from Cronulla and I'm glad to know that you & Bubs were able to get away for a little holiday which must have been a much needed break for you after looking after Uncle Perce and Aunty Poll.

Very glad you knew I'd been with Mrs. Cubbin, Mrs. M's sister and by a coincidence, the very next day brought a registered parcel from her containing a cake, which is a very kind thought considering especially the shortage of cake-making materials over this side. If Percy has bought this home you mention, I

shall have to call on him occasionally and punish his Baby Grand piano. Hope you let me know his change of address, because I suppose it's expecting too much to think he'll write. As yet I haven't sighted the parcel of chocolate and preserved fruit you speak about, but I'm surely looking forward to getting it, and will raise the roof with my howls if it doesn't show up, because such a parcel would be a great treat. Pleased to see that you and Percy both received the Xmas cards I sent as that should mean that all the ones I sent, about a dozen, arrived okay. I'd expected them to reach you long before they apparently did though, because I posted them about the 9th of November.

On Thursday afternoon I was dragged out for a scratch game of hockey, and the weather was just right and for some reason the boys couldn't seem to get enough - we played a fierce, fast game all the time and when full time was up, they wanted to keep going and so we had another half hour. As you may guess, days are getting noticeably longer now, and I thought the only chance of the game stopping, would be failure of light. However we eventually tired down, and just had time for a shower, hot for once, before going to supper.

For the past week I have been giving a lot of time to swotting for my examination for Leading Writer, and it was all set that the Paymaster Commander was going to see me on Saturday afternoon, when the ship would be comparatively quiet. Imagine my disappointment on Friday night when I had to make the necessary arrangements for him to be taken to hospital by ambulance. It's only a relatively minor matter, but if I don't pass and get recommended before the 24th of this month, I'll have missed next quarter's advancements and that will mean waiting until the July batch which is very annoying to me, because as you probably know well, I'm too ambitious to be satisfied staying as I have been in the same rank as when I joined, and all because of the stupid seniority method of advancement. Perhaps the Paybob may be back in time, but if he's not, I'm going to try to appeal to the Liaison Officer at Aussie House to have me examined by some approved persons.

The other four chaps in my Mess have deserted me today, and I've been left to my own devices about getting food, but as I'm pretty well in at the galley I've done alright. For supper tonight, I've used my radiator to make toast and also prepare a tasty "Welsh rarebit" from pusser cheese and right now, I've got a can of water on the radiator containing one real egg which believe me is some luxury, and soon I'm going to yaffle the first hard boiled egg I've had since leaving

Flinders.

The early part of the afternoon I devoted to dobeying several hankies and half a doz. pairs of socks. The rest of my washing I give to the dobeying "firm" onboard who do a pretty fair job and they have quite a big connection. I've had a very serious talk with one of the "owners" and when their business gets bigger, I think I'll muscle in on some of the profits by organizing the financial and paper side of the business - trust me to keep my eye on anything in the money-making line - I also spend a lot getting around over here, but still it's just as well to do things properly while I'm here don't you think. If I was here as a tourist I wouldn't economize! (Just had that egg and if I do say so myself, it was just right. Had no butter for the toast, but tinned milk spread on it helped it down.)

Put in a fair amount of time this afternoon setting up my photos in an album I've just acquired. I've got plenty of time for the job, so will try to make a good show with them. Am still waiting to get the ones I took of London and Canterbury developed - spoke to Ken Bracey on the phone during the week and he is going to write & tell me where to send them.

My little girl in Wales has written to tell me that she is coming up to London next week-end, so I'll have to make some plans for entertainment that will repay her hospitality in some measure. I don't think she knows much about London, & it will be a case of me showing her around - sounds queer doesn't it? I'll have to dig fairly deep into my britches for this and show her the best of everything & I'll let you know in my next epistle how everything goes off. Bye bye for now Mother, regards to all and sundry and for yourself, all my love -

Your affectionate son,
Jim.

P.S. I'll go & listen to "Winnie" give his speech now & see if the war is over yet.

Letter No. 18

S.5294
Writer J. F. Yeomans
c/o H.M.A. London Depot,
"Australia House",
The Strand,
LONDON.
30th March.

Dearest Mother,

Didn't have the chance to write to you last night as I usually do, but I can still remember the events of the past week-end well enough to chronicle them fairly accurately; its one of the best week-end leaves I've spent in England, and is definitely the best one I've spent in London.

As I mentioned in my last letter, my little Welsh girl "Dean" said she was coming up for the week-end to see London and also incidentally, me! In my usual scrounging manner, I was able to scrounge week-end leave from 4.15 on Friday afternoon and was in time for the expected arrival of her train at Euston Station at 6.40. Of course the train was late, so I had to hang about until it finally arrived at 7.25 and I was very relieved at being able to pick Dean out of the crowd.

I helped her take her bag to the Hotel where she was booked in and very conveniently, it was only about 100 yards from "Aussie House", just off the Strand in Norfolk Street. We were both near starved so went to the "Strand Palace" for the dinner dance there. As a dance it wasn't the best, and as a dinner it was nothing to write home about, but nevertheless it suited us pretty well. Noticed three other Aussies there, all airmen, and right through the week-end, we were continually bumping into the "Wallabies".

I called for her early Saturday morning and we had a look at the Law Courts at Temple Bar, and then walked right up Fleet Street to St. Pauls where we had a look around. By the way, Dean hadn't been to London since she was 14, so naturally she found a lot to interest her, and she could also realize something

of the pasting they've had from Jerry. From St. Paul's we took a bus back to Trafalgar Square where Dean sent a telegram to let her folks know she had arrived okay. By the way, I sent a cable to you from the Strand the previous night and suppose you have just about received it by this time.

We walked down to Piccadilly and then looked around Soho at some places Dean was interested in, and then looked for and found the "Three Vikings" - a Danish restaurant that Mrs. Stang's brother had recommended to me. The menu was in Danish, but I had it all interpreted for us before ordering. The food was very good, and the coarse bread was really nice. Just to say we'd had it, I ordered "vodka" to drink, and found it to be the same colour as gin & with an aroma somewhat like that of a very dry sherry, and it's a terribly warming drink and I realize now how the Russians keep warm in their Winter. The shock came with the bill, when I saw that those vodkas had cost 5/- each - one more item written off to "experience".

I had booked seats for the matinee at the Savoy Theatre, one of London's best, and for 12/- each we had good seats in the Dress Circle and saw Robert Morley give a good performance in "The Man who came to Dinner"; remember I saw it with you & Mr. & Mrs. Marris just before I came away. This time though it was the play I saw and I liked it almost as much as the picture because the dialogue is very fast. Dean was very pleased with it, and it makes an outing worth-while when one's companion obviously enjoys herself.

That evening we booked a table at Fischers Restaurant in Bond Street, for the dinner dance, but I must admit being in a bad mood when we got there. The table was only supposed to be reserved for me till 7.30, but somehow we managed to catch wrong trains in the Tube and had to change several times to finally get to the right station and even then it was quite a job to find the joint. However, as soon as I got there and had something to eat and a dance, I began to feel much better and finished up really enjoying myself. Our waitress did me well - she must have noticed the way I polished off my roast lamb because she wangled me another plateful and made no extra charge on the bill, so I thought that for once, my tip was going in a good cause. Dancing finished at 10 p.m. but most everything stops early in London and at anyrate, it meant that I was capable of getting up fairly early the following morning.

Once again calling for Dean, and this time taking the camera because of the

clement weather, we started off by walking along the Thames Embankment to the Parliament Houses and then crossed over and looked in the well-known and fashionable church of St. Marguerites, Westminster, and then looked in on the "Abbey" itself. We didn't stay for the Service, because there was still a lot to be seen, so I hope you'll pardon us.

From Westminster Abbey, we walked through St. James Park along to Buckingham Palace which is a sad disappointment for visitors. Never was there a place that looked more like grim old barracks - lets hope its a little more comfortable looking inside. The good weather had brought plenty of people out and it was a source of amusement to me to watch the punctillious manner in which the Service-men were saluting officers every few yards. It amazed me to see RAF men saluting army, soldiers saluting Navy etc. and I followed the impartial course I usually adopt and saluted nobody.

From the Palace, we walked up round the old St. James Palace back to Trafalgar Square where we caught a bus down to Marble Arch, which is yet another great disappointment to a visitor who expects to see a structure compatible with its wide reputation. Even at that hour, the "spruikers" were busy tub-thumping in Hyde Park and we listened for a few minutes and then cut across to one of the popular "Lyon's Corner Houses" and had a nice lunch at a reasonable price. By sheer good luck, we arrived just as the restaurant opened and didn't have to wait in an irritating queue which quickly formed as soon as the place filled up.

Dean suggested going to the "Tower of London" and that was alright by me as I hadn't got around to going there previously. So we jumped on the appropriate bus and were there in about 15 minutes. Not long after we got there visitors were allowed in for inspection and were formed up in groups, each under the care of the Beefeaters, who are once more dressed in the old traditional costume. Our Beefeater guide, was a burly, heavily moustached Irisher with a great sense of humour, even if he was a bloodthirsty old divil. By the way, our group was very cosmopolitan, and I should say almost half of it was composed of American service-men & women, who seem to lap up all these places of historical interest. There were two RAAF pilot officers there & so I made the third Aussie in the group. Must admit these two boys looked the smartest dressed of any service-men there - Dean said so too! Well Mum, I certainly learned some history in our tour of inspection and these English were certainly a tough lot

of boys & girls in the old days. Dear old "Bloody" Mary had no less than 300 poor wretches burnt & her charming sister Lizzie had the bare 500 chopped up. I learned for the first time that she chucked poor old Sir Walter Raleigh into the Tower & left him 12 years there before having him beheaded. There are certainly a lot of famous people interred in the chapel in the grounds, included amongst them being the aforesaid Raleigh (minus head, which his wife managed to get hold of & have embalmed) and a couple of Henry VIII's unfortunate wives. That place has certainly seen plenty of grim happenings, what with murders, poisonings, knifings and executions - quite a history.

There was a "whip-round" for the guide at the conclusion & I should think he got enough for his week's beer money & just a little over too. Just outside the Tower precincts there is one of the very oldest churches in London - "All Hallows". We did have a look at it, but unfortunately like so many other London churches of note, it was almost completely gutted by fire during the "Blitz" period - it is a shame. Quite near it is a R.C. church which was also mostly destroyed. The unique part of it is the fact of it having skulls and crossbones carved in stone above the entrance door - seems a strange thing for a church doesn't it?

In England, cinemas are open on Sundays, so we went to the "London Pavilion" to see a show I'd wanted to view - "I Married a Witch", taken from one of that old reprobate Thorne Smith's books. Frederic March and Veronica Lake were in it and I was pleased to see that our old friend Cecil Kelleway had a good part too. He was placed 4th to Robert Benchley in the billing. We both enjoyed it, and you might mention to Merle & Cyril that it's taken from one of Thorne Smith's because they really introduced me to his books & I think I've read them all now.

As usual the worst part of the week-end was going back in the early morn. Dean intended catching a train on Monday after looking round a little bit, probably with an eye to doing some shopping. Considering the short time, I think we covered a lot of ground, and in spite of the leave costing me over £10 I don't begrudge it, because I enjoyed it myself and it paid back in some measure the Welsh hospitality I'd received.

Had one letter from Australia this morning, from one of the girls at work and she mentioned that they'd received the Xmas Card I sent from New York.

I would have loved to hear what they had to say when they saw the post-mark. She said that my mate, Colin Ayres, the one I took out to Merle's in Melb. once, has transferred from the Army and has passed out as a pilot for the RAAF.

There's a buzz about 7 days leave coming off next month, & if that eventuates, I'll take the opportunity to slip up to Scotland & look over Edinburgh & perhaps also Glasgow. I'm still very much okay Mum, so don't worry!

Best regards to all inquirers & as always my best love to you.

Your affectionate son,
Jim.

Letter No. 19

S.5294
Writer J. F. Yeomans
c/o H.M.A. London Depot,
"Australia House",
The Strand,
LONDON.
7th April, 1943.

Dearest Mother,

Once again I have to report "no mail from home" but knowing that you do worry about me, I'll punch out the usual letter which I try to write weekly providing work or other "business" doesn't interfere. This time I have yet another new place to write about, and in its way it is world famous wherever education is mentioned. So in future, when the matter of snobby people talking about "our children's education" comes up, you are quite entitled to tell the truth and say with tongue in cheek - "My son went to Cambridge"! No need to say when I went there, or the fact that I was only there for a week-end, otherwise you might spoil that grand impression Cambridge & Oxford University educations seem to make on a lot of our home-folk. However, I'll begin at the beginning:-

Last Saturday at midday, by good luck only, I managed once again to quit the ship for the week-end and cramming myself in a train at the local station, I transported myself to Victoria Station, London. There I met one of my friends, a Leading Sig. and a very nice chap at that, and going under the name of Geoff Stokes. Geoff had made all arrangements for our brief stay in Cambridge, and I'd been content to leave details in his hands as he'd got off the ship earlier than me. We had to catch a taxi in order to get to Liverpool Street Station in time to catch the train, & even the ruinous fare the cabby charged was worth while to save a wait of 1½ hours. On the way, Geoff gave me my photo prints which he had collected for me in London that morning and I was very pleased indeed with the snaps I'd taken in Canterbury and in London on a previous leave. There was also one of Mr. Stanghan and self taken in their yard on Xmas day by Mrs. S. & I'll enclose it with this letter and trust it arrives safely.

After reaching Cambridge, about 1 hour 40 minutes run, we proceeded by medium of two buses to the house of the Professor to whom Geoff had an introduction. Said Professor, named "Stanner" by the way, met us as we were coming down the street and he was everything the average books describe a Professor as being. Comfortable but untidy tweed suit, untidy hair (no hat) large glasses, age about 46/48 and yet occasionally a boyish look, because you see, he is a bachelor. Knowing him to be a bach. we hadn't known quite what to expect in the way of a dwelling place & certainly didn't expect to see the large rambling building with an imposing drive-in. The house has large grounds - no less than 2 acres in which he grows lots of vegetables, fruit trees and also flowers. One of his greatest prides & joy is the large glass-houses he has.

Inside the house, we found the rooms large, airy, comfortable and with plenty of window space to admit the natural light. His living room was surrounded by shelves in which there are thousands of books of every sort and description, and I could live a week in that room very happily.

Apart from his own work (he is a Professor in Genetics), he dabbles in engineering, radio, and photography and he paints and sculpts occasionally and also plays a little on his grand piano. Altogether a very satisfactory, if a slightly male, house to live in. He has two gardeners to look after his gardens, lawns and glass-houses, but only has one of their wives in for two hours in the morning to clean up, and he does everything else, including the cooking, himself. For guests that week-end, he had Geoff & I, two RAAF sergeants, and two Canadian pilot-officers, and he got the meals for us, cleaned up & washed up after the meals and saw that we had competent guides to whatever we wished to see. What a man!!

On Saturday afternoon after scoffing the afternoon tea which he gave us from a lovely silver service, Geoff & I looked round his garden chatting with him the while, and then pushed into the main part of Cambridge to have a quick look-round before dark. We had supper at a Services Canteen and then Geoff, not being a dancing man, hied him off to a quiet pub, and I looked in at the "Dorothy" cafe where a dance was in progress. I managed to bump into an Aussie Flight-Lieut. sporting the ribbons of DFC & DFM and he fell on my neck to get home news as he's been away two years. I joined his party and had quite an enjoyable evening.

Getting "home" proved to quite a job in the pitch dark, as the street I wanted, "Storey's Way" was not universally known, and I had a couple of false starts before getting the good oil from a member of the fire service. It was a good 20 minutes walk, and when I got in, mine host and the other guests were deep in a learned discussion. However, we broke it up fairly soon, because clocks had to go on another hour at midnight and therefore it was 1.15 by the clock when I crawled between the nice clean sheets.

In spite of our promises of an early start, it was 9.30 before we had bathed and arrived down for the excellent breakfast cooked by the Prof. As it was a fine day, Geoff & I were soon on our way and we had a good general look around Cambridge and arrived at the place the Prof. had got us invited to lunch, about 15 minutes late. We lunched with Dr. & Mrs. Murray, both of whom know Aussie well, although he hasn't been out since 1929 & she 1931 and they wanted to know all about everything. Here also we had an excellent meal and good conversation, and were sorry to have to run along at 2.15 as the Prof. had arranged for an Army padre friend of his to show us through a couple of the colleges out of the 22 that go to form the "Cambridge University".

First of all we saw through St. John's College and then through Trinity College, which are the oldest and the most famous of the University group. The libraries in both of them impressed me very much - on entering, the musty smell is almost suffocating and the part containing the old leather bound volumes fascinated me. Picking out books here & there, I found on the fly-leaf inscriptions such as "Printed by —, London 1593" &c. and the books like that were in quite good condition, and fairly easy to read in spite of the old English style of phrasing and spelling. The library at Trinity is quite "modern" compared to the other buildings, but is notable, inasmuch as it was built by Christopher Wren, the builder of St.Pauls.

We next looked through King's Chapel, which is the best piece of architecture in Cambridge, and in it there is much evidence of the influence of Edward III. and Henry VIII. who were both closely connected with the founding of that particular college. According to our worthy guide, the wood carving in this chapel is also very notable for its artistry, and I am really learning about such craftsmen's workmanship.

It was about 4.30 when we finished up there, and being still light till 9

o'clock, we decided to go "boating" on the famous River Cam, which speaking truthfully would hardly be called a creek at home. However, we hired a canoe and paddled along, getting a new angle on Cambridge and the surrounding country. It was a really lovely day, and drifting along with the run of the river through green fields and peacefulness, was a very welcome change after the noisy workaday life. We returned the canoe to the boatshed at about 7.30 and after a small but enjoyable beer, returned to our host's house, to have the supper he'd prepared and then we had to be on our way. Very luckily I managed to get some film from one of our officers, and so will once again have the best possible kind of souvenirs of my visit.

We lobbed back in London at about 11.15 and then had a bit of a job to get accommodation for the night. Finished up at Westminster YMCA & being right alongside "Big Ben", it was after 1.15 before I managed to get sleep, because every time I started to drop off, his ¼ hourly chimes would have me fully awake again.

Reminiscences of our recent week-end were spoilt for Geoff and I, because the Commander called him in to break some news that drove thought of all else from his head... his brother has been killed in New Guinea with the AIF. There wasn't much I could do, so I just left him alone & warned the boys against annoying him in any way, as it hit him very hard.

"Goody"came to light today for the first time since I've been away with a cable that was sent from Sydney on March 30th. - just sent best wishes & good luck - haven't sighted a letter from her as yet which is queer, but not worrying me particularly.

By the way Mum, you might tell Mrs. Chalk when you see her, that I've had a bit of a yarn this week with Freddie Hollister - she'll know him, and if "Jackie" is home please give him my very best regards too. All the best to the folks and let them know how I'm popping up. If Bubs or Merle should enquire, tell them I'm pretty busy, and your letter will have to do for all, but that I'll reply to any letters when I finally receive some more. It would be a good idea if you'd keep my letter, Mum, because as I'm not keeping a diary, they might be interesting for me to refer to at some dim future date. Look after yourself, and till next time,

Much love, from your affectionate son,
Jim.

P.S. I'll forward photograph with next letter

Letter No. 20

S.5294
Writer J. F. Yeomans
c/o H.M.A. London Depot,
"Australia House",
The Strand,
LONDON.
18th April, 1943

Dearest Mother,

There isn't anything spectacular to write about this time I'm afraid, but I thought you'd like to get a note nevertheless and as far as possible, I want you to have letters from me regularly so that you will know that everything is still okay.

I haven't had a letter from you for over a month now, and in that time, the only mail I've sighted from Aussie has been a Smith's Weekly dated November 29th and a Sunday Tele. dated 13th Dec. - interesting to me even now, but not a great consolation. My little girl in North Wales writes to me pretty regularly, and perhaps it's a good job that my mail is quiet because lately I haven't had much leisure in which to answer mail etc. I've been meaning to drop Mrs. Stangham a line, but haven't yet got round to it. I'll have to make an effort to see them before we finally push off. I have 7 days leave coming to me within a week or so, but won't go out to them then - that would be a waste. I've just about definitely fixed it with Col Curtis, a Brisbane Writer who has only just arrived, that we'll go up to Edinburgh together and have a look round. Should be a good opportunity to get to know the Scotch folk - I'm certainly meeting variety - first Welsh people, then of course the different "brands" of English & soon I hope, the braw Scots. However, within a fortnight I should be writing to you letting you know just what sort of a place it is. From all reports I should like it. Glasgow is close handy, & I'll probably pop over there just for a day & a night for the sake of saying I've seen it.

As I said previously, there has been work a-plenty lately and it isn't likely to cut down until we get to sea, because now we have our full complement of crew.

No longer does the ship seem like our personal property and it seems that the days when I knew everyone on the ship are now over, as I'm afraid the mob now make me feel like a stranger. However, I have met quite a number of familiar faces and swopped a lot of yarns. Things were too brisk for me to get off this week-end, and that makes the first time I've stayed on the ship two week-ends in succession, so really I suppose I can't complain. Our good friend "Jerry" has been a bit of a pest lately, and in fact has paid us no less than two visits this very afternoon, possibly on account of the lovely weather we are having. No doubt he will be over again tonight, and as the weather is exceptionally mild, I think I'll sleep up on deck for the first time since we left the tropics. I've been waking lately with a headache, probably due to warmer weather making it stuffy down below deck. As I said previously, we have had a marvellous spin as regards sunshine for the last week or so, and in fact I've been thinking of swimming a lot, but I wouldn't care to indulge around here.

In spite of work, I have done my best to get sufficient exercise, and the weather has been a great inducement, not forgetting the fact that when the clock shows 5 p.m. it is really only 3 p.m. so it is a very nice time of day to be having a game. This last week I played hockey twice, and on Thursday was surprised to be asked to referee the match between our officers and the local "Wrens". Both our Captain & Commander played, and I certainly smirked to myself to be ordering them around, and pulling them up with my little whistle when there was a penalty against them. The "Wrens" of course play a lot, and didn't give occasion for many penalties, but even when they did I didn't pull them up, but woe betide the Officer who did anything out of place. I enjoyed the game as much as the players - quite a lot of Ship's Company were watching, all barracking for the girls, but in spite of their & my efforts, the officers won 7 goals to 2. That made them pretty cocky, so the Gunnery Officer who was Captain of their team challenged me to get a Ship's Company team together to play them tomorrow afternoon. We had a practice game on Friday afternoon, & we'll thrash them tomorrow I'm sure.

Seeing some of our new arrivals still wearing white caps & cap covers seems to me now rather queer & out of place, so that's an indication of how I've become accustomed to the English pattern of life, doesn't it? By the way, we officially commissioned as H.M.A.S. yesterday, and after you get this letter, you'd best start addressing your letters to the name of the ship - I trust you know what it is, but just in case you don't, I'm sure Mrs. Chalk can tell you. The

ship didn't change its name at all, I suppose you know!

Not being able to get the week-end off, I decided I'd have to step ashore for a bit of a break, so yesterday Col Curtis and I stepped off at 4 o'clock and went to the pictures in a near-by town to see "Wake Island" and the "Falcon's Brother" - both very passable shows. We got out at about 7.40, but there wasn't a place in the whole town where we could get something to eat, & that on top of a very nice beer that had served to sharpened our appetites even more. Finally we jumped on a bus and went to another bigger town, where we managed to eat our fill.

Don't know whether you follow the happenings in England, but there is a big price increase in lots of things as from tomorrow - looks like my 7 days leave is going to be expensive. However, I'm doing pretty well for cash taken all round, and tonight I'm getting started on a new part time job which will bring me another £2.10- sterling per pay as well as my usual screw. I'm going to handle the financial & accounting side of the lads who run the biggest "dobeying" or laundrying firm on the ship, so I'll be keeping me hand in and also earning a little easy money at the same time. My commission on my two lots of film that I let the ship's "photo firm" print has amounted to over £7 with still a bit more to come, so I've paid for my photo expenses & a bit over. Trust me to get amongst the money one way or another eh! Working it out as I usually do and taking into consideration the exchange on Sterling, & the fact that once we get to sea I won't be able to spend much, I reckon I'll have about £100 Australian money by the time we hit home, and so I think that's a pretty good effort considering my travelling etc. - a profitable trip.

Well Mum, that's all for now - regards to all & all my love,
Jim.

P.S. 19/4/43 - Letter today from Goody dated 27th November.

S.5294
Writer J. F. Yeomans
c/o H.M.A. London Depot,
"Australia House",
The Strand,
LONDON.
26th April, 1943

Dearest Mother,

If this turns out to be only a brief letter Mum, I'm afraid you must excuse me and blame it on to pressure of "business" - however, I'll do my best to relate events to date - particularly those of the past week-end.

Work has reached it's greatest peak yet, and there is hardly a night that I haven't found it necessary to work till midnight - pretty wearing, but it must be done. One reason is that in any case there is a terrific lot to do, and another is shortage of staff, because half ship's company are on seven days leave, but as I am due to go myself this Wednesday I can't complain about having to "earn" the leave the hard way.

The only mail from home that I've sighted since last writing you was one from Goody, her first by the way, dated 27th November, so it's ancient history, and I haven't had time to reply to it as yet.

Not having been off the ship for three weeks, I simply had to skip last week-end, so on Saturday at midday I just downed tools and went ashore. Friday of course was Good Friday, but I hardly realised it as it made no difference whatever to our routine. Col Curtis, one of the new Writers came up to London with me, and very luckily I had asked my girl at Chelsea, Joan Revell, to book rooms at the Victoria League for us, which she did luckily! Several of the lads were there at the booking office when we came in, but they weren't able to get rooms and we just paid our money and took our bags up.

I'd asked Joan to get one of her pals for Col, so I went out to Chelsea to

collect the two girls and we met him at an appointed spot. I suggested dinner somewhere in Soho, but when we got there nearly all the restaurants etc. were closed on account of Easter, but we finally found a little Greek place open, and had very nice mushroom omelettes there and then after a little walking round, caught the Tube out to the Hammersmith Palais.

It was the first time I'd been dancing out there, and it was quite a big place and had two good bands and in spite of the crowd we enjoyed it. The fun came, when a great crowd of police entered the place, took guard over every exit and then with the help of a great crowd of Military police, Yank police, Canadian M.P., women police, Naval patrol, and women Service police, they checked the identity cards of everyone leaving the place. We might have been held for questioning only for the eccentric reputation Australians enjoy, because we don't have leave passes, and as Col has just got here, he hasn't even got a passport photo in the back of his identity book as yet. However they let us through okay and we met the girls outside. The civvies went through one way & Services the other & once past you weren't allowed back & Service chaps wanting to wait for girl-friends & wives kicked up a row about going out into the blackness, but all those trying to force their way back, were soon slung out again - much fun!!

We took the girls to their various homes, and both Col & I found our way back safely - as a matter of fact, both of us were lucky enough to pick up taxis.

Just managed to get up in time for breakfast in the morning, but I'm afraid we didn't go to church as I suppose we should. It was quite a nice day, and we decided to go out to the famous "Harrow" for a look round. Firstly we got a bus from outside the door to the Swiss Cottage Station where we caught an electric train on the "Bakerloo" circuit to Harrow-on-Hill. Spring is well on it's way now, and it makes a marvellous difference to see leafy trees, where just a month back they were so horribly bare. Naturally the main thing at Harrow is the famous school, where incidentally our Winston went to school, as all the locals soon tell. We gaily began walking the wrong way untill we saw fit to ask directions, and then getting on the right track we walked up through the football & cricket fields of the school to the school buildings and the two old churches on "Church Hill". One church was St. Marys & according to the notices was founded by St. Anselm in 1094 - after visiting Canterbury Cathedral, I now know that St. Anselm was Archbishop of Canterbury at that time.

There was a marvellous view of nice green, clean looking country from there & then we slipped over to look the other way from the second church. In the grounds of this church, was a sun-dial of a type I'd not seen before. It was a "Cross" on a bronze plate at an angle & the time is read from the shadow not on the dial, but along the cross bar of the cross. Naturally with Summer Saving Time in operation, the sun-dial was two hours "slow".

Mingling with the crowd now streaming out of church, we managed to convey the impression that we had also just come out & easily falling into conversation with the folk, we learnt all the history of the Harrow School, which of course with Eton, is the public school of England. We followed the crowd, a surprisingly large proportion of which wandered into the "Kings Head" for a pot, so we followed. This pub is pretty old, but is one of the best I've seen, and is in a marvellous position. Drinking over here is so congenial that it is impossible to compare it by Australian standards. There are quite as many women as men drinking in half a dozen large, low ceilinged rooms, and walking on through these, we came to a well kept terraced lawn, where tables & chairs were set out, and from where there was a marvellous view of the surrounding countryside.

Instead of walking back to the Harrow Station we had arrived at, we took several "short cuts" & finished up walking about 5 miles & taking a train from South Harrow back to town - this time on the Piccadilly Circuit, an entirely different railway system to the one we'd come out on.

We had a snack at the Boomerang Club at Australia House at about 2.30 and it was there that I ran into Jack Carmody, ex Bennett & Barkell, who is now a Sergeant Pilot - might remember me mentioning running into him the afternoon I took Goody to watch the baseball at Waverley Oval last August.

I dashed out of Aussie House at about 3.20 and caught the bus to Chelsea, arriving at Joan's place just about 45 minutes late - however I had a small block of chocolate for her that I'd bought at the Boomerang Club so she forgave me.

We caught the train from South Kensington out to the well-known Kew Gardens and had a very enjoyable walk through them. They haven't very much in the line of flowers, but there are lots of trees, now in leaf and also many trees with a good show of blossoms. There are also lots of glasshouses, and it's just like being down the South Coast to walk through them because they have such

a lot of Australian ferns, palms and bushes. People seemed particularly struck by that red bottle brush scrub plant, I think we call "Banksia". There was also some wattle there, but not very good. Bananas were growing in some of the glass houses & crowds gathered around to gaze at them.

We walked through the blue-bell section out of the actual "Royal Gardens" along the Thames bank and up to Richmond, and from there got a train to Hammersmith where we picked up a Tube for Piccadilly and had tea at Lyons Cornerhouse Restaurant for a moderate price after queueing up for a while. There was a nice string orchestra there & I enjoyed the way they played "Warsaw Concerto". I had to rise at 4.30 so took Joan home straight after we'd finished woofing.

This time I really am enclosing the photo of Perce Stanghan & myself, so you can see how we both look. As far as health, I'm pretty right although of late haven't been getting the exercise I could wish though I certainly did plenty of walking over the week-end. I weighed myself recently and went 11 stone 6 lbs so my weight is actually going up. The question of exercise should be taken care of soon, as I'm going on 7 days leave on Wednesday and will do the rounds of Edinburgh and other Scotch places of note if I can manage alright for time. You'll know that I've been to Edinburgh long before you get this letter though, because I'll send you a cable the first day I'm there.

Must leave off now Mum, so till next time, regards to all and much love,

from your fond son,
Jim.

P.S. Forgot to mention that Pay Commander has opened a Savings Bank on-board & I deposited £30 stg. today & that is entered in the PassBook as £37.10. Not bad eh! J

Letter from Will Alison to Ada Pearle Yeomans

Personalised Paper From St. Michael's
Burntisland, Fife
Scotland
8th May, 1943

Dear Mrs Yeomans,

Last week-end we had the pleasure of meeting your delightful son, Jim, who came with a pal Colin Curtis, for the week-end. My wife and I have had our name for quite a time on the Allied Information Bureau in Edinburgh. Through this Bureau we have enjoyed visits from boys of many nations, Norwegian, Dutch, Belgian, Polish and Canadian and they have, without exception, proved grand fellows. It has really been an honour and privilege to have them. Many of them have lost everything and often know nothing of the fate of their folks. Yet how bravely they carry on!

The weather clerk was on his best behaviour. It was just like Summer and did Jim and Colin enjoy the fresh green of our springtime. I say they did! They told us of their lives and dear ones in Australia. They were greatly amused by the fact that everyone they met seemed to have some friend or relation in Australia.

My wife, 2nd boy (at back on left) and two girls are also on the enclosed snap. My oldest boy – a 6ft 2in lad of 20 years is with the Tanks.

This weekend a fierce Easterly wind is lashing everything accompanied by a pitiless rain.

I hope you are in good health. Jim is first class and a grand lad.

Yours sincerely,
Will Alison

P.S. Tunis, Bizerta in the bag! WA

Kirkton Rd, Burntisland, 1949. (Burntisland Heritage Trust)

Letter No. 22

S.5294
Writer J.F. Yeomans
C/o H.M.A. London Depot,
"Australia House"
The Strand
LONDON
9th May, 1943

(Typed & handwritten on Air Mail Letter Card)

Dearest Mother,

According to rumour, these Air Mail post-cards travel swiftly so I'm giving the method a try. As you can see from the date, today is an auspicious day for beginning anything new. How well do I remember the same date last year – after flying up from Melbourne on the eve, I awoke at home on my birthday morn and then I believe did justice to the breakfast you prepared. At night, of course, we all went to the "hop" at the R.S.L. Coogee – quite a family reunion. How different is this year – last night I worked till about 10 p.m. then laid my hammock on the Office floor and read one of Ernest Hemingway's books till 11:30. I wake this morning, and upon opening the scuttle find that we have reverted from the recent lovely weather to the typical Winter period – more like May at home than the English May. Being a little late down to the Mess, breakfast was cold, the tea was cool and quite naturally enough nobody greeted me with "Happy Returns" which is just as well as it inclines to be a little embarrassing. The radio however, by some strange coincidence was playing variations of "For he's a jolly good fellow" – they must have played it about 5 different ways, so I took that as being a personal greeting. Today's programme consists only of work, but maybe late this evening I will step off and quaff a couple of beers, just to show that I remember the significance of the date at anyrate. Certainly don't feel any older, and I have to grin at proving that fortune-teller of yours at Cairns wrong this time!

By now no doubt, you have received the cable I sent from Edinburgh, and perhaps also the postcard I sent from Glasgow – if not the letter, it's something

for you to look out for – also sent one to Bubs from there. When I arrived back from Scotland on Wednesday morning I was very pleased to find cables from you and Mrs. Marris waiting for me – apparently the Marris's are once more living at Brighton according to the address of the cable. Notice on yours you say "Thanks for letter" – surely you have received more than ONE letter from me – I'd be very sore if you hadn't had more than that although I suppose that there must be quite a few lost. The last letter from you arrived on the 17th March and was dated 8th January so I'm certainly not very up to date with news, but guess everything must be okay or you would have cabled me.

I'm sure you'll want to hear about my doings in bonnie Scotland, so I'll record as much as space permits. I was given just 6 days leave and in company with another Writer, Col Curtis, caught the night train from London to Scotland on Wednesday, 29th April. The train was rather crowded, so as per regulations for Services over here, we had to travel in the 1st class instead of 3rd – easy eh! Arrived in Edinburgh early and booked in at the Victoria League branch in Princes Street. We used that as H.Q. for two nights, but it isn't nearly up to the standard of London Vic. League so we went to some very hospitable people across the Forth on Saturday.

However before that, we had a good look round Edinburgh. We lived in the famous "Princes St" reputed to be the most beautiful street in the world, because only one side is built on. The other side is a sort of valley in which are Gardens and memorials and then topping it on a great rugged hill is the "Castle". This castle is mentioned in a book I have at home – "St Ives" by Scott – have a glance at it – I tried to remember it all when we had a look round the Castle.

From the Castle we walked down the 'Royal Mile' which is rather "slummy" and very full of pubs compared to Princes Street's complete absence of them. At the end of the Royal Mile is Holyroodhouse Palace which is in a marvellous setting with a big hill called "Arthur's Seat" at the back of it. The Palace itself is not very impressive, but the Scotch Royalty were pretty poor I understand. It is built quite plainly of the same stone that seems to be used in all buildings round that part of Scotland. It is strange to see small cottages or shops built of this stone, same as we use for churches and the complete absence of brick buildings makes the towns look very gray and sombre.

We took a bus ride about 1½ hours over to Glasgow and found it very much busier and much noisier than Edinburgh. The Glasgow people are grand folk, always ready to help and speak more broadly than the others.

I went to dances both nights in Edinburgh and the ½ hours Scotch dancing they had was an education. They go more crazy than any jitterbugs!

On Saturday we crossed the world famous Firth of Forth bridge by train and went to Burntisland Fife on the shores of the Forth to stay with the Alison family, who treated us royally and gave us a lovely room overlooking the Firth and fed us well.

We lived quietly our three days there, just walking, loafing, reading or me playing the piano and they seemed sorry to lose us when we caught the "Flying Scot" back to London on Tuesday. Altogether an enjoyable time and I DO like the Scots folk.

Much love,
Jim

P.S. On my last day in Scotland I took a bus trip to "Perth" – quite a nice old city on the River Tay.

The Flying Scotsmen arrives at Waverley Station, Edinburgh, 1940s. (BFI National Archive)

Letter No. 23

S.5294
Writer J.F. Yeomans
C/o H.M.A. London Depot,
"Australia House"
The Strand
LONDON
18th May, 1943

Dearest Mother,

I wrote you an Air Mail post-card on my birthday, the 9th. so didn't think I'd reply straight away when I received letter No. 15 from you the following day. Prior to that letter the latest was No. 5 which came on 17th March so you see there was quite a big gap. However, some of this gap was filled yesterday when I was really in the boom as regards mail from you - letters Nos. 8, 9, & 10 came together and I had a real session of reading before commencing work. Because of the missing letters, it's necessary to read between the lines to get the meaning fully of some of the things you say, and I do hope they eventually turn up.

I'll go through your letters in Number order and comment as I travel through them. No. 8 dated 31.1.43 - you say you saw Jack Hill & hopeful at the beach, & I'm sorry you didn't speak to him, as he may have given you some Club news at anyrate. Percy had just had a good win on "Soho" at 10-1 & by a coincidence it was just about then that I was paying my first visit to Soho in London. Apparently you received my cable telling you that the air mail wasn't any use - actually a trickle of Air Mail has come through in under a month, but those instances have been very few and far between and it's not worth the big extra postage to take the chance on being a lucky one. This letter is actually the first time you mention Cyril & Merle being settled in at 61, and I sincerely hope that they aren't inconveniencing you too much - still I suppose it's company for you.

Hope you liked "Holiday Inn" which you went to with Mrs. Howard - I saw it in Rhyl, North Wales about 2 months before. You also mention in one of your letters seeing "Yank in Dutch" and I recall seeing that in Chester in the oldest cinema in the world - the original building was built in 1200 odd. First

mention of getting the photo Pete Tonkin and I had taken in New York and I believe the people who took it send a nice letter with the photo - so Pete's mother said. You may possibly remember that he was working at the Charing Cross Bank before he joined up & as he is in Coogee S.L.S.C. that will account for the Long girls knowing him. He also tells me that one of them, Dot Long is engaged to Des. Watt an old club-mate of mine who lives in Market Street. Glad you enclosed the clipping about young Russ Nixon's rescue, he was a promising young colt when I left.

No. 9 - 6.2.43 - you'd received a letter from Mrs. Stanghan giving details of how I came to look her up etc. and I can just imagine how pleased you & Mrs. Marris were to hear about my doings from someone else. Haven't heard anything of Mr. Chalk and am pretty sure you will see him before you see me.

No. 10 - 15.2.43 - more talk of fig jam, and I could surely use some of it right now, but I'll take you at your word that you are keeping some for me and it should be nicely mature by the time I have it. Too bad you or at least Merle hasn't heard from George McGrath lately, and I surely hope he is still battling along okay - I had a letter from him about 5 months ago, but haven't heard since which is not really surprising. Glad you had a yarn with Mr & Mrs Newsway and told them how I'm getting along. I wrote to Betty some time ago, and had a reply from her last week when your letter arrived. Glad you have had the tuner along to keep the piano okay, and I'm looking forward to hammering it again at a later date. Hope young Ray is getting alright because I know how much it must worry poor Merle.

No. 15 - 21.3.43 - glad to see from this letter that you had received 9 & 10 just prior to writing and you mention replying to my No. 6 in the last letter - hope the missing ones turn up alright later. The birthday cake you referred to hasn't arrived yet, but I'm living in hope - unfortunately the parcel you sent on New Year's Eve with all the chocolate etc hasn't come to hand, so I suppose we can regard that as definitely lost now. As you can imagine, I spent my birthday very quietly, but I've already mentioned that in a previous letter. I wasn't terribly happy to read about this work you were doing, and as I've not yet received your previous letter telling me what it's all about, I can only conjecture that it was helping out in some fruit canning place at the height of the season. Note that you got the negative of the photo of Mr & Mrs. Marris in their courting days and it should have given them quite a surprise & caused much amusement

when Lofty & Bubs etc saw it. In view of the birthday greeting in your letter, it was remarkable that the letter should arrive the following day.

I am still keeping up my sight-seeing of this country and last week-end, I went off at midday on Saturday with Colin Curtis again, and we went by train to Evesham, Worcestershire which is just in the district embraced by the justly renowned Cotswold Hills. We arrived there at about 5 p.m. and found our way to the Northwick Arms Hotel where the Hospitality section of the Empire Services Club had arranged a billet for us - as guests of the manager. The Northwick Arms is in a beautiful situation, just across the bridge from the main part of town, and right on the banks of the Avon - just 15 miles from where old Will Shakespeare once lived. Lining the Avon at this point are rows of elder trees looking very beautiful at this time of the year... I must mention that since last Friday up to today, the weather has been ideal and you've no idea how we welcome lovely sunny days with clear blue skies - certainly makes England appear in a very attractive light. Although so close to Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon, we didn't go up there, as the Hotel owner, Mr. Nicholson told us that we'd be very disappointed in it, and recommended instead the trip I wanted to make to the tiny village of Broadway - a typical Cotwold's town. However, to proceed chronologically —

As soon as we arrived we were shown up to our bedroom, a lovely room, and then taken to the private apartments where the owner's elderly aunt entertained us with conversation, tea, toast & lovely little cakes (the best since leaving home) until Mrs. Nicholson returned from her row on the river with another honorary guest - an Aussie Sub.Lieut. with whom we got on very well.

When Mr. Nicholson came in, he had the local curate with him, & I was just a little surprised to find us all going downstairs to drink a little beer before tea. The lovely pewter tankards we drank from seemed to add to the flavour, and the little curate was really "one of the boys". We were later joined by an English Sub. Lieut. and an English Colonel and one of the local landowners and they were all very sociable. After tea we wandered outside to hear the local band playing on the lawn by the river, just outside the Hotel. It was in connection with the local "Wings for Victory Week". We turned in fairly early and had a good night's rest, which I might mention was much needed.

After breakfast Col took me rowing on the Avon & he did most of the hard

work & enjoyed it as he used to be a competition oarsman before he joined up. After lunch Col elected to loaf round talking to the other guests & I believe he also did a little work in the Hotel garden, but I borrowed Mr. Nicholson's bike and rode about 7 miles to Broadway which quite came up to my expectations, and then I pushed up a long an arduous hill to an old look-out tower, and was rewarded by a marvellous view. Coming back, I had about 2 miles of steep downhill, & coasting all the way was like getting back to the old days when I was seldom off my bike. Having only my Navy uniform with me, I had to wear it and guess I'll be needing a new one when I get back home - don't intend to buy one over this side for a variety of reasons. I had my camera with me and am sure you will like the pictures when you see them.

Unfortunately we had to leave at 7.10 as it was the last train & if we'd stopped the night & caught the 6.58 in the morning, we would have been "adrift" and would start a bad reputation as well as getting the usual punishment. Mr. Nicholson walked to the train with us and told us that we were welcome anytime - just ring him, and we would be set for a room. I might mention that in the time we stayed there, we had better service than the paying guests and ate the meals with the owner & his family & friends - no doubt about hospitality like that.

After quitting Evesham early like that, it was most annoying to get back onboard ½ hour adrift in the morning because of the orderly in the place we stayed failing to wake us at the time requested, and as a result we were placed in "Commander's Defaulters" and got the usual stoppage of pay & leave, as well as the black mark. I am hoping for a Recommend for promotion to be cabled to Australia by the Paymaster Commander at the end of this month & hope this little episode won't make any difference. I don't really anticipate that it will, and as I successfully passed the examination for Leading Writer, I have high hopes of being able to send you a cable within a couple of weeks informing you of my advancement, which of course means more money, more privileges and of course a "hook" on my left arm.

Well Mother Darling, I consider this a pretty good effort, especially if you knew just how much work I have to do these days & I honestly average a solid 12 hours work daily - partly because it must be done & also to make a good impression on the Paybob so I'll get my recommend.

My regards to the Tanners, Kellands, Chalks and also the Kay family, and

give my love to Merle and Aunty Maud & say I'll be writing Merle very soon - she may even get her letter with yours. All my love to you too Mum, look after yourself for me, I'm looking forward to seeing you so very much, and I've lots to tell. My self-esteem is so much higher than when I was at F.N.D & I'm sure you'll think that's important, in spite of my long absence, but I'm hoping that round about 8 Hour Day I'll be ducking Cyril at Bronte. Till then, lots of love from your affectionate son,

Jim

P.S. This envelope is stamped with the address of the Allison family whom we stayed with in Scotland.

Letter No. 24

S.5294
Writer J.F. Yeomans
C/o "Australia House",
LONDON
26th May, 1943

Dearest Mother,

I wrote to Merle last night telling her about last week-end's interesting points and you will probably both get your letters in the same mail, but I know there would be strife if I didn't write my usual letter to you and I had to reply to Merle's last letter so that's how it stands.

Firstly we'll talk about the weather - for a stretch of about a week we had weather that would have put even our late October weather to shame, but then we struck a cold patch, a wet patch, a warm patch (fortunately last Sunday) and then the wet & cold patches again, so you see between them all it's too, too much like Merle's beloved Melbourne.

I was pleased to receive a letter last Monday from my little girl in North Wales that she was coming up to London & bringing her friend from next door who I also know very well. The lass from next door, "Lorrie Davies" had never been to the big city before and was very excited and pleased about every thing I did for them and the places I showed them. I arranged good accommodation for them in the Strand and that was always a good central meeting place. Unfortunately I had rather a bad cold, which still lingers, although on the Saturday night I improved it a great deal by drinking the old Scotch remedy - 4 double whiskies & each whisky followed by a beer. As I'd been in the miseries before with my sniffles, it also served to buck me up and make me a little more agreeable companion for the girls. I spent a lot of Sunday in the sun & that helped a great deal toward shaking the worst of the cold off me.

After meeting the girls we decided that a day out of London would be very nice & I proposed going to Windsor Castle but discovered that members of the public aren't allowed through it, although I could go by myself in a special

tour if I wished. That didn't suit, so they suggested seeing Hampton Court - the palace which Cardinal Wolsey built & gave to Henry VIII - they say it nearly broke him, and having seen the place I can quite believe it.

We took a double decker bus out to Hammersmith and from the top deck we had a good view of the very nice localities on the way out - Knightsbridge, Kensington etc and along by Park Lane, and Hyde Park. From Hammersmith we took a double decker trolly bus the rest of the trip to Hampton Court, going right out through Richmond. It was about midday when we got there so decided to have lunch straight away at the Court Restaurant nearby & had some of the nicest mutton I've tasted in a long time. We had lager with lunch and that went down pretty well too! I was very pleased to listen to an instrument a street musician was playing outside - it was like a little organ, and reproduced notes that were half-way between church carrillions & the sounds of a music box. It is called a "dulcetone" & the music is made by a lot of little tuning forks - that information from the man who was playing, because I was interested enough to go and ask him.

Having finished lunch we went in through the Palace Gates just imagining some of the scenes that were staged there in Tudor times. The Palace itself is a huge affair with no less than three distinct court-yards and it is built of red brick and it was built well. The plaster is centuries old now & still there is not a crack in it. We were able to go through many parts of the Palace, seeing the state apartments etc. but quite a lot of it is in use - in the main by prominent Government men who have retired & have little money, or by widows of outstanding men - I noticed that Lady Baden-Powell was living in one of the apartments.[2]

Coming into the main hall, I was immediately struck by the imagination & beautiful colouring of a colossal painting that covered the wall round the wide staircase & the whole ceiling above. In spite of the years, the paint is still very clear & bright.

On coming to the King's & Queen's bedrooms & dressing rooms, I found their ceilings to have been painted also by the same man, and hung on the wall were beautifully painted tapestries. The painter's name was I think "Verrens" & he commenced the job for William of Orange in 1690 & later went blind, and

[2]Robert Baden-Powell was a British Army Officer, writer and founder of The Boy Scouts Association and The Girl Guides Association.

Queen Anne allowed him to live on at the Palace where he died in about 1706.

All the apartments have marvellous oak panelling, and on all the walls are hung beautiful pictures and also arms & armour of those bad old days. The dining hall is a big room, with a floor that makes it look like a ball-room only for the stained glass windows set all around it. At one end is a raised dais, where no doubt the Royal table was set. The kitchen is a tremendous place and the fire places were big enough to roast whole bullocks. Looking round the interior was lovely, but the grounds are the real beauty of the place and extend down to the Thames River.

The surrounding grounds were really planned by a man who knew his job, with broad gravelled paths, satiny lawns, fountains and avenues of different types of trees growing along each path. Unfortunately I've run out of film and didn't have my camera there as I would have loved to have taken some shots of the estate. In one of the glasshouses is a huge grape vine - planted in 1706 and still going stronger than ever - there were hundreds of bunches of grapes on this huge vine, only just forming, but it was amusing to see the awe with which the English people regarded them. I believe the grapes off this vine go to patients needing them in London's hospitals. As you may know - grapes in the shops here - that is when they are obtainable, are about 16/- per lb. at their cheapest and £1.10- per lb. is not unusual.

In the grounds is a maze - you've probably heard of similar things - hedges going round & round and the paths between them having turnings, branches & dead-ends just to confuse people. We went in there, just for the fun of it and I considered I was lucky to get out in about three quarters of an hour - although in that time I didn't walk out of an area covered by 100 yards by 50 yards. Guess that was their idea of a good laugh in the old days, to turn someone loose in the maze and time them to see how long they took to get out.

There is a little cafeteria in the grounds, and we had a light tea there before going back to town. As usual we had to wait in a long queue for the cheap seats (4/6d.) at the Plaza Cinema in Piccadilly and saw two old, but good shows. Bing Crosby in "Sing you Sinners" and Bob Hope & Paulette Goddard in "Cat & Canary".

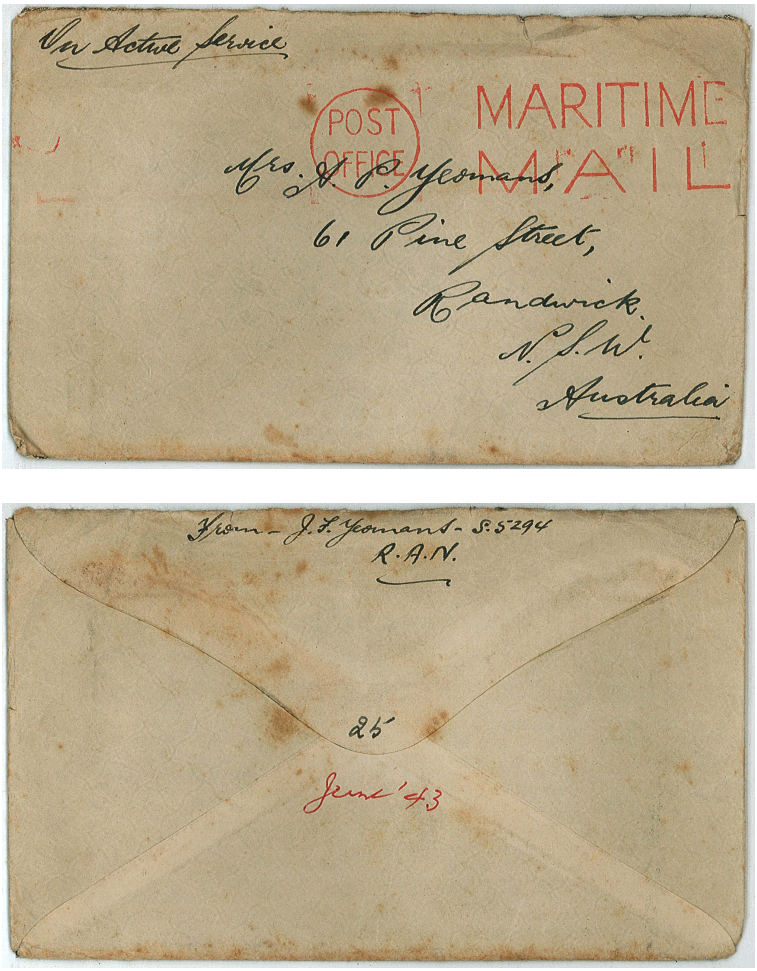
I've had the photos I took at Cambridge, Scotland and down in the Cotswolds

printed and they look pretty good, and will go toward making my already extensive collection more interesting. In all, I now have about 150 photos that I've taken since leaving home.

As I said in Merle's letter, I think it will be pretty safe to address my letters to "Leading Writer" by the time you get this letter, and I understand that I'll be back-dated to 9th May, so my seniority as a Leading Writer will be easy to remember won't it?

Cheerio for the present Mum - I'll keep writing as often as I possibly can, but probably my mail will be inclined to get a little irregular soon, so don't worry if there are any gaps between letters. As usual, best regards to all inquirers & if you get a moment, drop a line to the Bain family - 49 Crieff Street, Ashbury and let them know that I'm still battling along okay.

Fondest love from your son,
Jim



Envelope from Jim Yeomans containing letter 25, June 1943. (Jim Yeomans)

S.5294
Writer J.F. Yeomans
C/O "Australia House"
The Strand
LONDON
1st June, 1943

Dearest Mother,

Following a week-end "duty" onboard, there isn't much topic to fill this letter, but I know you like to hear from me news or not, so try wherever possible to side-step work so I can oblige with your regular letter. At least I have here the satisfaction of answering three of your letters, Nos. 11, 12 & 13 which arrived on Friday in one of the biggest batches of Aussie mail I've yet seen. Included in it for me, there were also letters from Bubs, Merle, Cyril and the monthly newsletter from the Assoc. of Accts. As usual, I'll try to reply to your letters piece-meal starting with No. 11 which was written on 23rd Feb. You had just received my letter number 5, which I wrote while at sea last year just before reaching England. You mention that the clippings I put in for Percy were there okay, and hope they were of some interest to him. I've been rather expecting a line or two from him, but as yet have heard nothing, although that doesn't surprise me at all. I don't remember you acknowledging receipt of my letter No. 4 and hope you got it okay. I remember I wrote it in a devil of a hurry in New York! I don't doubt what you say about Neville making me look to my laurels in swimming when I get back, and unless I manage to slip in a little training somewhere before then, I think that young Allan would account for me pretty easily.

So the old Pinto finally came to light with a phone call - about time he did too! I think he must have been misinformed about just missing the trip with me because we aren't having any of his mob onboard to the general joy of all, although I would very much have liked him to be with me, and what a shaking up we would have given the States as well as over here. Just by the way, I HAVE written to him and also Bubbles several times, but as yet haven't had any replies

from them - good job I know that both of them are lousy correspondents. You mention Merle getting a letter from her late neighbour Miss Wild - I'm glad in a way that I didn't get any more addresses to look up, because as it is I'm likely to get into enough strife when it's found I haven't looked up so many of the addresses I was given. Have to laugh to read what you say about the "Goodie" family still not picking up that photo, and it will shake them when they hear that you finally took it out of "hock" if you carry out the intention you express in your letter. So far I've only had two letters from Goodie, but I'm glad rather than otherwise because it tends to get a bit bothersome to reply promptly to mail and keep up with work too, so if I just had the letters from you, I think I'd be quite satisfied. This War has certainly brought on my literary streak - prior to my Naval career, I doubt if I'd written as many letters all told as I do in any month now. I must use up miles of paper in the course of a year.

Your letter dated 1st March was unnumbered, but you mentioned the fact in your next letter, so I know it should have been No. 12. You mention Cyril taking photos of Merle & the baby, and he enclosed one in his letter to me, and I sent it to Mrs. Stang. in a letter Saturday, as a sop for not having been out to see her since Xmas. That sounds pretty dreadful I suppose, but you don't see anything simply visiting people and "nattering" so I just haven't bothered, but I promised that I hop out there somehow before we finally skip.

In your No. 13 dated 7th March, you mention receiving the letter I wrote from Mrs. Cubbin's home, and that must be one I didn't number, because although I remember well enough writing it, I haven't any note of it in my little book. I also feel a little guilty about not having been over to see them since that time, but then again they are a long way and also are a curb on me getting round, seeing and doing what I please, although I'm not ungrateful for the way they treated me. Seems funny over here to read about the Bondi Surf Carnival - I can hardly imagine it now, and I wonder whether I'll ever compete in another like I did in the good old days when I got my first taste of victory by cleaning up Holcombe.

You mention that your old pen is starting to crack up under the strain, so first chance I get at a convenient place, I'll try to remember to buy you another one - a real good one. I'll do the best I can for you & the girls, and maybe also the menfolk if I get the opportunity, and only wish I'd had the foresight to take the measurements of all of you before leaving. Stockings are the important thing

I should think, so if I get the chance, I'll gamble on 4's or 5's fitting all of you, and buy up a quantity of those sizes, so hope I'll be doing right.

Since last writing to you, my time has been filled with routine work, and lots of it. However, last night I took the opportunity of going ashore, my first time off the ship in a week, to have a sort of busman's holiday, as I went to the pictures and saw "In which we Serve" - to the ordinary public I suppose, it would rank as a very good show, but I guess I know too much about the racket now, and I was pretty critical. I walked all the way back, a good couple of mile - exercise, which I really am in need of just now, and I'll have to forsake my work a little I think, and see about keeping in condition. Wish I could get in a little swimming - sounds a little queer doesn't it - being on a ship and not getting the opportunity for a dip, but it would take a lot of inducement to get me in here.

To go onto more general subjects, the big subject for discussion among everyone in England is of course "When are we going for the big hit?" and I suppose you'll know that answer before this letter arrives, and I hope that by then everything will be well under control. The English people are confident of smashing "Old Jerry" (as they all call him) for good & all, and I surely hope they are right, and then we can all pile onto the Nips, and then maybe one fine day, I'll be sitting right at this machine, hammering away a letter telling you what Tokio or what will be left of it looks like - that will be the day!! At anyrate, all the Pommies are very pleased to see the Huns copping a lacing from the air from our "sky-boys" - they took it, and they want to see what the others think of it - according to all reports, they don't go much on it. Of course Jerry still whips across now and again, drops a couple of eggs and scoots, and sometimes he gets away with it, but it is pretty poor measure to what he's getting. In spite of all the reports we used to get in the bad times when England was getting blitzed, it's possible to get in lots of lovely parts over here, like the Cotswolds for instance, and even in parts of Kent, which Lord only knows is close enough to the Continent, where it doesn't seem possible that there is any strife, and contrary to my opinion when landing here in the miserable Winter, I would like to come back here in peace-time - in the Summer though, and take a leisurely look round the whole Island, by car.

According to reports, I don't think you'll receive my letters Nos. 15 and 16, which is too bad, because I wrote 15 when I was in Canterbury, having a look around that Cathedral city and I told you all about it in the letter. However, I

suppose that it will be just one more thing I'll have to tell you all about when I lob home. I can see an awful lot of talking ahead of me when that happens, so you'd best have something on the ice to relieve my parched throat every now and again. Just about the time my four older nephews are having their birthdays, I expect to blow in, so that being the case, I'd better be prepared and have something for the brats too - just what I'll get them so they won't be disappointed in me I don't quite know, but maybe I'll have an inspiration before then.

It looks very much as if we'll have the "gag" applied very shortly, and then I won't be able to tell you anything about places I visit, so unless you are very good at guessing, you'll just have to wait very patiently to hear about such joints.

As you notice, I am still plain "Writer", but I'm expecting my "hook" almost any time, and as soon as it's on my arm, I might think about doing a little more studying to get another one to go with it & that would put me on par with Mr. Chalk so here's hoping.

Regards to all, and all my love Mother -
Jim

Captain J.A. Collins, aboard Shropshire calling for three cheers for His Majesty King George VI. Captain Collins was taking command of the ship during the ceremony of transfer from the British Navy to the Australian Navy. The British Government had offered Shropshire as a replacement for HMAS Canberra, which had been lost in action, August 1943. (Australian War Memorial, 041556)

King George VI aboard Shropshire in Scapa Flow before the cruiser sailed for the Pacific, August 1943. (Australian War Memorial, 080613)

Letter No. 26 (West Coast of Australia)

Writer J.F. Yeomans S.5294
H.M.A.S. "Shropshire,"
c/o G.P.O. 23rd Sept, 1943

OPENED BY CENSOR

My Dear Mother,

It's so long since I received any mail that I don't know what the sensation is and I don't even think of or expect letters now, so don't bother writing again and tell the girls that they are relieved from this duty too. As ever, I am in pretty good health except that I need more sleep and a whole lot more exercise. I plucked courage to see the "Fang bosun" (Dentist) and he found 4 teeth that need small fillings, or fillings renewed –2 of them I think are front teeth. The appointment is for next Tuesday and I'm not particularly looking forward to it, but I guess it must be done. Had quite a bit of time ashore at our last port of call, and met some very decent folk who insisted that I stay overnight at their place when ashore and even loaned me their pajamas. I felt a "heel" every time they used to get up at 5.30 A.M. to give me breakfast before I returned to the ship, but they always insisted – it was never just a mere snack they cooked up either. That's someone else in my list for Xmas cards this year –cards alone will cost me a small fortune!

I bought you a length of dress material that I think you'll like –colour blue, with buttons and buckles too! Also silk for Merle and a wrist watch for Bubs so you will all do well. For Xmas though, I think I'll just give you my love and kisses and try to straighten up my battered bank balance. I've bought no fewer than 10 varieties of cigarettes, not mentioning tobacco, so the men and those smoker sisters of mine should be kept happy for a while.

That's all for now – regards to all at home – especially Jacky Chalk.

Much love,
Jim

The Fang Bosun (Dentist) treating a patient in the dental bay aboard HMAS Shropshire, Feb. 1946. (Australian War Memorial, 125059)

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans,
Same address.
30th Oct. 1943

Dear Mother,

Strange as it may sound, mail has been literally poured onto me yesterday and today, although most of it was very "stale". However there was another letter from Doreen, one from Mrs Stanghan who is down in Worcestershire with Perce at the time she wrote, and one from my little Scots WAAF Louise, enclosing a nice photo of herself – poor kid is now stationed right up in North Scotland and she'd be feeling the cold now. As well as these overseas letters, there was one from Celie dated 11th May and some from you, Bubs, Merle and N.S.T. all written in May or June so weren't very interesting.

Settling back into routine isn't easy after my spell, and after a long watch last night I thought very wistfully of my 9A.M. sleep-ins at the Valley. Speaking of sleeping etc reminds me that I omitted to bring back my "Pullman" sheet with me and I'm very annoyed with myself for forgetting this important item. Don't you let anyone sneak it will you?[3] By the way, I found those white shoes I was moaning about losing, but guess I'll have to hang onto them till I get another opportunity to drop them home. Also my kit bag came to light again, so things have been breaking my way.

I've only seen Peter once since coming back onboard and then didn't get the chance to speak to him, so I don't know just what his latest scandal is yet!

I've been wondering today how you got on about your house at the mountains and also whether you'd need my Power of Attorney. At any rate, I sincerely hope you can satisfy yourself, because I realize now, just how trying the past 12 months at "61" have been for you. No doubt you'll give me the whole "works" when you write.

[3]This prized "Pullman" sheet was in fact stolen by Jim while travelling by train in Britain. He told me it was far more comfortable than those issued by the R.A.N.!"

As you can realize, there is not much news at this stage and I am "flat out" with the inevitable work, so I'll close down for now. As yet everything goes okay, but I'm looking forward to using my old "Yale" in the door again, and fairly soon I hope.

Love to all the family and tell them not to panic for letters, I'll get around to writing sooner or later.

Much love,
Jim

Envelopes and letters sent by Jim to Ada during the war. (Jim Yeomans)

Chapter 4

Fire on the Islands: Bombardment and Boredom in New Guinea (November 1943 – July 1944)

Letter No. 2 (New Series) Airmail Letter Card (Top of Australia)

S.5294
Ldg. Wtr. J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
5th November, 1943

Mom Dear,

While I have a chance I'll drop you a note, because I've an idea that from now onwards, there will not be much regularity about my times of writing – so please Mum, don't start worrying if they arrive at erratic intervals. If however, you can manage to keep up the old weekly letter I should be kept happy as regards mail, and keep the Sunday papers coming too please.

So far I have been enjoying more than my share of summer, - probably to make up for the one I missed. However, I haven't been rash enough to try to take it all at once, and as a matter of fact have been too busy to loaf in the sun for more than about half an hour daily. There are some who tried to get their colour all at once though – and they did too – a nice lobster shade.

Actually this trip has been very pleasant in spite of the heat and I also felt more interest by knowing that you too have seen a great part of the trip. I should also be able to talk very learnedly with Tom and Percy when I see them again, and if I recollect rightly, I think Dad mentioned being here in an old diary.

As far as food goes, we are doing quite well, and I personally have as much tucked in my locker as would be found in "Bimlow" kitchen. I'm always thirsty though and am schooling myself to eat salt as I believe it's essential. Saw the dentist again on Wednesday and to give credit he treated me fairly gently in making two fillings and I think I have still one to fill – teeth are a menace aren't they? At least it's done gratis! I've wondered how our Lottery ticket got on, as it should be drawn by now - in a way, I hope it didn't get anything because I shouldn't like to "waste" any of my luck in the old Lottery, as I may be needing it all. If and when Neville sends that photo of the Burragorang group to home,

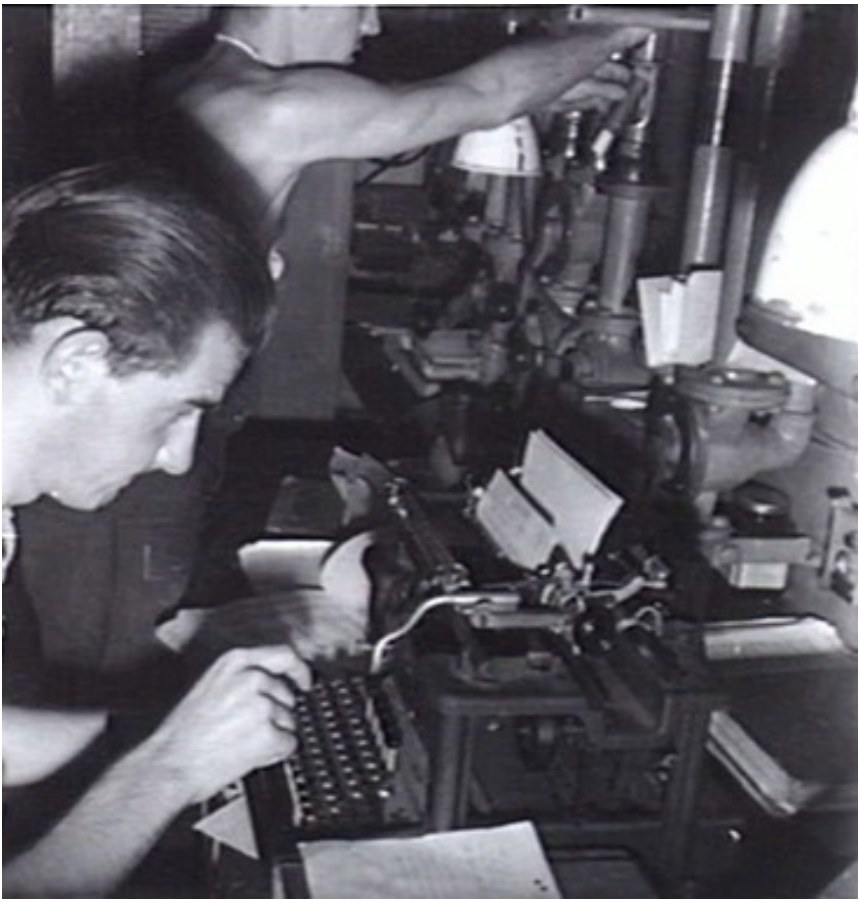
you might send it along Mum as I'd like to see it. Tell Pinto it's too bad he isn't still in his old job as we could have fun together.

I had a talk with Peter and he said he was only kidding the lads by telling them he was married, but he says he intends to do the deed just as soon as we hit home again. I don't get it –-the boy is "nuts"

By the way, my £4- fortnightly allotment should have turned up by the time you get this letter and in addition I should be able to put aside quite a few shekels in my own Bank A/c as I don't think this jaunt will give us the same opportunity for spending cash as the last trip – just think Mum – a year ago today I was in Chicago – seems a long time and a long way away. In case I should forget to mention it again don't forget to post those two Xmas cards before the end of the month and that should give them suffic. time to get there. I'll try to write to Bubs by this post, if possible, and in any case give my love to all the family and friendly folks and I'll try to get round to writing a few lines of drivel to them later on.

Till next time, very much love,
Your fond son, Jim

P.S. How are those studio photos I had taken?



Coders working in the wireless room aboard Shropshire, 1945. (Australian War Memorial, 112180)

RAN personnel working in the canteen aboard Shropshire, 1945. (Australian War Memorial, 111876)

Letter No. 3

S.5294
Ldg. Wtr. J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
12th Nov., 1943

Mom Dear,

Very pleased to receive your No. 1. letter yesterday as I hadn't anticipated getting mail so soon. Too bad about the property at Blaxland, but I guess you'll have to pay high to get the place you want with vacant possession.

Decent of Lofty to give £4 for that watch, and remember if it doesn't behave, give him back his cash and get the watch and then there'll be no squawks. I only wish I'd kept the band off it as the strap I have at present is almost rotted through, partly due to old age as I've been wearing it 3 years, and partly due to my copious output of sweat lately.

I'm afraid Pinto will have to bear the strain of Bubbles' wedding on his own, but hope to be able to send a telegram – if not, you can put over a yarn for me. Have you bought anything besides my two towels for her?

I'm very hostile about that parcel episode – poor Dean – I had an airgraph from her dated 5th Oct. so that's fairly fast and referring to my first good meal that I had written her about, she wanted to know whether "eggs" are a fruit or vegetable.

Drat Nik. Ross – he should learn to take photos before he starts charging fancy prices – just remember he has a deposit of mine too! One of the lads took a photo of me and one of Des and I on deck the other day, and I'll send them along as soon as they're printed.

Had a visitor on board the other day –young Ted Clifford, the Bank Manager's son who I knew of old from Flinders – according to his stories the old place has changed a lot and swarms with WRANS now – very few of our Branch are left there now.

I've told you how hot and sweaty I am, 24 hours per day, but haven't been given the chance to have a swim yet. I don't think you'd believe it if I told you the sea-water temperature and I suppose I'd better not. There is plenty of washing to do, underclothes and shirts and only occasionally socks, as only occasionally we wear them. (I've even seen the officers trotting happily around bare-footed and I'm using my open sandals a lot). The other day I had my newly washed clothes confiscated because they were hung in an unauthorised place and I had to pay the fine of a cake of soap the next day to redeem them and wash the lot again.

Some of the chaps decided it might be cooler with hair off and there was consequently a big following of "shavers" reminding me of George McGrath and Fred Coonan. I hadn't fallen for that yet as I don't think I'd look very glamorous or feel comfortable with a shaven pate.

I haven't previously mentioned the rain we get, but it just seems part of the picture now and we find nothing unusual about rain descending from what had been 10 minutes before a nice blue sky. The boys take a risk in sleeping in the open on the upper deck as it rains without fail each and every night. At present we are out on the briny, but I'll try to post this when we get to some more solid land. Pardon this poor epistle but I'm feeling very sleepy (always am) and I can't be bothered thinking too deeply.

By the way, letter from Goody with yours- I should feel ashamed for not going to see her, but it will keep till next time. I suppose.

Very much love, Mum darling
Your son - Jim

P.S. I'm afraid I didn't enjoy that lovely grape jam you gave me – before I even opened it I dropped it on the deck while rummaging in my locker the jar broke and jam went everywhere – I could have wept - very glad you didn't hear what I said about it all. Am still saving the fig for the moment I feel in the mood

To keep cool members of the crew of HMAS Shropshire lie on deck while they are hosed by their comrade, May 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017149)

Letter No. 41

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans,
Same address.
18th November, 1943

Mom Dear,

Your letter No. 2 dated 8th Nov. arrived last night together with other mail which included letters from Merle, Airgraph dated 15th October, from Dean and a Xmas parcel from The Assoc. of Accts. The parcel was quite small, but useful - 1 Tek toothbrush, tin Gibbs dentrifice, 2 Gillette razor blades, chewing gum and a plum pudding. That makes two small plum puds. I have now, but will wait until I'm in a cooler clime until I attack them.

I'm glad you were able to get Bubbles something nice, and I know I can rely on your judgment and I'm sure she'll like the supper set. Don't forget though, that it is my present and you're to take the cost out of one of my Fortnightly £4's - however, when you put a card with it, don't forget to mark it from "US". I'll try to drop her a line today, just in case I don't get another opportunity to send her a telegram at the right time. Too bad you'll have to come down from Hardy's Bay to be present at the event, but I won't discourage you from doing that, although perhaps I should, but I would like to know how it goes off, and how Pinto performs.

It should be nice for you to be with Lofty and family for a little holiday, although as you say, give me Burra. every time! I note that you saw young Betty again, and you might let me know when the big event comes off, so that I can send my regards to the new arrival. Makes me feel ancient, as it's not so very long ago since I used to depend on Bet as a partner if no one else was available and she was a good kid to take out.

I told Fred Hollister about Jackie Chalk popping off, and we've both been conjecturing where he would go - just shows they don't keep them locally very long now - I think I'd best stay where I am!

It's just too bad about that Lottery ticket, but you might note what I said about that in my second letter, and you'll know I don't mind very much - so far there hasn't been a great deal of excitement, but it's just as well to have a little luck up my sleeve for a while yet. In an earlier letter I said I hoped you were continuing sending along papers, so no doubt I'll have one soon.

I suppose you had an interest in the "Cup" last Saturday, but I hardly knew 6 horses in it, and didn't even have a sweep ticket or a bet. We couldn't get the broadcast of the race and all I heard were the placings - I certainly wouldn't have backed any of them.

Last Sunday was a very satisfactory day as far as weather and everything else was concerned. I turned away from my work at about 10 o'clock and listened to a concert that was given by our own talent over the ship's broadcasting outfit, and it was a very creditable performance and I believe they intend to make quite a regular feature of it. I sweated over my "dhobying" down in the bathroom no less than three times through the day, and everything dried beautifully on the upper deck. Showers were off, so some of the lads started hosing each other down up on the foc'sle and next thing a few dived over the side and had a swim. No sooner did I see this than I was with them. Not long after this official permission to swim over the side was given, so in I went again in company with most of the crew, and it was really lovely - there was a little bit of fuel oil hanging around on the water but I managed to dodge most of it. My sun tan is coming along quite nicely - I'm neither red nor black yet, although I've noticed the old mop is getting a little snowier, just like old times. We have quite a few lads who look like niggers, and Col Curtis is one of them - I'm quite expecting them to stage a Corroboree any day now. Col gets stacks of letters from his new wife and I think he is quite hostile about it, because it means he must answer them - a terrible hardship for his casual ways.

There is talk of a boxing tourney to be held onboard, and I may have a crack at it, if I can get into training. With all the sweating I've...

Last page of this letter is missing

Letter No. 4ii

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans,
Same address.
25th November, 1943

Mom Dear,

Your letter No. 3 dated 14th November duly arrived and as usual I'll pick out the bits that need any comment. As you observe, I have settled down to work again, and sometimes I doubt that I've been home at all. This trip, however, there is nothing doing as far as outside interest goes, and all recreation and entertainment have to be found on board. Just the same, I'm quite happy and always have the consolation that I'm saving tons of money, and maybe one day it will come in very handy.

There was a letter from Bubs with yours and I'll answer that today or tomorrow if I get a chance. We're still battling with the closing of last quarter's ledger, and believe me it's quite a job. However, as soon as that is completed, as it should be in about a week, I'll have plenty of time on my hands and will devote as much of it as I can to getting really fit, and also to bringing my fingers back to the standard they were at after being down at Burra. Although I'm looking forward to doing the course that you know I've been recommended for, I'll be sorry to leave the ship because I'd sooner be onboard than in a Depot any day.

27.11.43 — I've been a trifle busy since typing the above and this is the first chance I've had in 2 days. The typewriter is in use at present, so I must pen it.

Your friends at the Buffet seem to be forming a Matrimonial Bureau – according to you, half of them making "matches" for me. At present I have my own problem –I've had 4 Air mail letters, a photo and a parcel on the way, from Norma Goodacre, all of which looks bad to me, so I'll have to figure out an easy way to give her "the air".

Actually it's rather funny, because last time, although you didn't know

about it at the time, it was she that gave me "the air". She's a nice kid, but not up to the idea of "Mrs. Yeo. Jnr".

I can't understand the snag you mention regarding Des. Watts and Mrs. Long's daughter, because I believe Des. is one of their clan too!

You speak about a trip to Orange and Cudal, and I hope you were able to go with Tom and "Bobby".

Before I forget, will you do my Xmas shopping for me Mum, because the "shopping centre" up this way doesn't cater for the usual kind of "presents". Take one of my allotments for the necessary "sugar", and buy something for Bubs, Merle, Percy and Aunty Maude –about £1 each. You'd possibly have some idea what they'd like and you can forge my name to a Xmas card.

Don't know where some of our mail must have gone, but I had an airgraph from you in the mail dated July –quick service eh! There was also one from Dean dated 26th October.

Haven't had any chance to get into condition for boxing, so I missed out on the first tournament. All the contestants weren't feeling in top form either and were showing the signs of being "puffed" without the wear and tear of fighting. Young Dally Starr, who you might remember seeing in Hospital at F.N.D. won his bout very well. All the winners got £1 canteen orders and I think they all shared them with their beaten opponents.

We had a little excitement the other day when we had a "man overboard". We made a mighty circle and went back and lowered a boat to get him. Luckily he was quite okay, though it must have been a horrible shock. I'm glad it wasn't me at any rate as it couldn't have been a nice sensation watching the ship go away.

That's all for now Mum, so cheers till next mail.

Your loving son,
Jim

HMAS Arunta coming alongside HMAS Shropshire for vital messages, Sept 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017710)

Letter No. 5

S.5294
Ldg Wtr J.F. Yeomans
Same address
3rd Dec., 1943

Mom Dear,

Pleased to learn from your letter that you made the trip to Cudal and enjoyed it. Had a yarn with Lieut. Beattie and mentioned what you said and that made him recall the food and particularly the cream he had at Borenore when he was up there. Seems a long time since I saw the Pattersons –the last memory of them I have was when we were at the "Coach and Horses" and Meg embarrassed me by trying to kiss me in the tram – don't spose I'd know either of the girls now, or they me! After what you say, perhaps Tom might come my way – it would be a turn up if I met him wouldn't it?

As usual my news is pretty poor, but I guess that as long as I write to tell you I'm feeling okay that's the main thing as far as you are concerned. Well, I can honestly say I'm feeling very fit in spite of the fact that I haven't set foot on shore for five weeks. Training is bringing my weight down a bit, but what's left now is pretty tough and I've definitely decided to enter the boxing tournament which is scheduled for Dec. 21st and I should be at the top of my form if I continue my present training programme. My weight is down to 10 stone 10 lbs now and I hope to get it to 10.7 so I'll be in welterweight division and won't have to fight anyone heavier than myself. Don't worry about me as regards the boxing – I can take pretty good care of myself and having an objective to train for makes me do it seriously and not half heartedly - in a way, it's just like the old days –only I was training for swimming then. I am told by the way, that a boxer's preparations are very beneficial for a swimmer, and at that maybe my limbs will benefit. However, I think my days of Championship swimming are over – it will be solely for pleasure after this, except to keep up to the standard required for life saving.

Had a letter from Pinto who says he is also getting into good condition, but "doesn't know what on earth for!" He also gave me a few addresses that

may prove useful one of these fine days. I'm just waiting now for his report of Bubbles' wedding –I sent her a letter and a wire.

Wrote an Airgraph to Col Ayres yesterday – he's where I was this time last year! Gave him a few addresses he might find handy – if I could talk to him I'd give him some wrinkles. Had an airgraph from Dean's sister-in-law yesterday and already a Xmas card from a girl at work. Got most of last year's Xmas cards about March. Don't know just how long my letters will take from now on as the mail is bound to increase in volume, but in case you don't hear again Mum before Xmas, a happy Xmas dear Mother and a peaceful and happier New Year and may we be together for next Xmas. Remember the last Xmas dinner we had together was 1940, at Narooma – this will be the 4th Xmas I've not had at home.

I'm supposed to play the piano at the next concert programme, probably held on Sunday – that little opening bit of "Alligator Crawl" has me worried but I'm hoping for the best.

Cheerio for now

Your loving son,
Jim

P.S. Hope you bought those presents I mentioned in my last letter.

Two members of the crew help reel in 6 inch Manila rope on HMAS Shropshire during operations north of Dutch New Guinea when the Allies captured the Japanese held base of Hollandia, May 1944 (Australian War Memorial, 017135)

Letter No. 6

S.5294
Ldg Wtr J.F. Yeomans
Same address
11th Dec., 1943

Mom Dear,

Received two letters from you last night– Nos. 5 and 6 dated 26th Nov. and 6 Dec. respectively – also 2 from Bubs, one dated Dec 6th (air-mail) and one 25th June – it's a trifle late isn't it? Well I was glad to hear about Bubble's wedding and that the date I guessed was right and the one Pinto told me wrong. As you say though, it does make the heart bleed to think she "turned" and I bet Mrs. Bain and Bill were hurt by the circumstances. You didn't mention where the newly weds intended taking up residence.

I can imagine Pinto doing his best to keep things moving after the wedding and I'll bet he wished I was there to help him out. You didn't mention if they had any beer there – that had Pinto worried when he wrote to me. Fancy Bill's ring being valued at £75 – he's certainly not going to get rid of it on me, not even if I was on the "market" – it would be above my means.

Don't go to a terrible lot of trouble over this parcel you're preparing for me Mum – not that I don't appreciate it, but I can't have you stinting yourself in any way or making yourself agreeable to disagreeable people for my sake. The fruit saline you speak about should be okay, but at present I can still buy "Enos" in the Canteen and that makes our water a little more refreshing.

We actually had a bottle of beer per man this afternoon at the cost of 9d per bottle and I indulged as I'd been in the sun for a couple of hours and was parched. Unfortunately the treat was spoiled as the beer was not cold.

Probably this letter will be a little late for the purpose, but you may give Lofty all the PIPE tobacco you find around, and Percy can have all the CIGARETTE TOBACCO with my compliments - don't touch the tins of cigarettes though - that is if Merle has left any.

Glad you enjoyed Hardys Bay, but it must be desolate going back to "61" – I want to get back to you, but as you say things are pretty awful and I'd hate to be stationed in Sydney and living at home the way things are at present. Neither of us are very charitable I guess, but Lord knows both of us are entitled to our own sweet home now and the spark of kindness seems almost burnt out. It makes me mad to think of you being a "stranger" or intruder in our own home, but I guess we must be patient for a little while longer.

By the way I know the officer Mrs Catterson referred to quite well and am on very good terms with him. Re the McGrath-Coonan hair style - it is enjoying steady patronage onboard, but is being eclipsed by the fashion of growing full beards – I'd love to cultivate one just to see the gossip it would cause in Pine St., but I fear me that my blonde hair would not make a good enough show – just the same I'm terribly glad to be fair haired and only shave half as often as my darker mates.

I'm afraid your papers haven't arrived yet but wouldn't like to tell you to stop sending because I want to know what goes on in general. Fortunately Mr. Pearson sends his news letter every week and that skims the cream off the noos – apart from it, I've had no letters from outsiders for 3 weeks – my girl-friends must have gone on strike!

I've ordered a copy of a Navy publication "H.M.A.S. Mk.II" to be sent to you but very much doubt if it will arrive before Xmas – as I haven't seen it, I hope it's quite quite pure and has no jokes or stories to shock you. As I wish to read it myself one day, you might see that "C" doesn't take it out of the house. It's okay to lend it to the Owers' family though. Felt that I hadn't given Neville much when I got back, so I sent him a copy for his Xmas and also it will be my reward for him passing the "Inter" – which I'm sure he will do. He's a good kid and I think a book of that sort will find favour with him. Hope you managed to buy some little present for the family and Aunty as I suggested!

In my last letter I mentioned that I would be playing on the ships' concert last Sunday and duly struggled through "Melody in F", "Alligator Crawl" and "St. Louis Blues". I was neither booed nor hissed so concluded that my performance met with approval. It was fortunate that I performed last Sunday, because I attempted to play this afternoon and find 3 or 4 notes quite "mute" –blame it on the "sweatiful" weather.

At Pinto's suggestion, I looked up a mate of his named Ray Bennett and had a good yarn with him. Found him relaxing in the shade on a stretcher, stripped to the waist and immediately noticed a scar on his shoulder similar to mine, only definitely neater. We had a yarn about our respective operations, (great fun) and I found his case was almost exactly the same as mine and was also done at R.P.A. Hospital. He's an older man than Pinto and it was done when he was 18, so guess his case preceded mine by a good few years. At any rate his is the first "twin" to mine that I've seen.

Well, well – I must make a confession! I've got another black eye – second in 3 months – dreadful isn't it! This time it was boxing and I didn't duck quickly enough – funnily enough the "bloke wot done it" is named "Coward" – he isn't! However, everybody assures me it's the best they've seen and already I'm gaining the nickname of "Stinker" or "Shiner" Yeomans. My mirror certainly reflects a sinister looking character! However, it will take more than that to stop me doing my stuff in the boxing tournament.

We had a concert party onboard last week who gave us a good show on the quarterdeck – all men and led by a singer who has always been quite a favourite of mine, but I doubt if you'd know the name, so I won't bother to mention it just in case the censor objects. They had a good swing band, good soloists, a quartette and some tap dancers – gave some skits and sketches and this singer did a good job on "Moonlight and Roses", "Donkey's Serenade" (no, it WASN'T Alan Jones!) Easter Parade, A pretty girl is like a Melody (I liked it best) and "White Xmas" (how nostalgic that is!) and we all joined in singing that.

Today was my washing day and you should see my khaki shorts – they've faded almost back to white again. You should see my poor pajama coat – the one you patched with curtain material. I did a job of sewing on it today, but am afraid it's only a question of time till it falls apart.

I've been wondering whether it would be a good time to look for a house or cottage to buy just now. We'll have a yarn about it when I'm in next, but thought you might just happen to see or hear of a place in our locality or Kingsford-Maroubra that you think I'd like. Perce might put up £500 or £600 and I could pay him back at £10 a month with moderate interest – I could rake up almost £400 ready cash by the time I get home – what do you think?

Your loving son,
Jim

P.S. What's happened to the 10/- I left with Nik. Ross?

The champion beards on the HMAS Shropshire, Sep 1944 (Australian War Memorial, 017633)

The proposed design for the dust cover of the RAN 1943 Christmas Book, HMAS Mk. II, 1943 (Australian War Memorial, 100662)

Letter No. 7

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
20th Dec., 1943

Mom Dear,

Your letter dated 11th Dec., arrived at midday today, so I'm taking the opportunity of answering it while I have the chance.[1] It's very nice to hear that my letters still hold some interest to you, because I felt they must seem flat after the always eventful letters I wrote whilst in Great Britain. Thanks for taking so much trouble in getting the presents for the girls and Aunty, and I have been amply repaid by thanks in a letter from Merle and also a surprise letter from Aunty. Naturally I couldn't guess who it was from until I had opened it, and I think she writes a very good hand for one of her age and delicacy. Last night I dedicated to answering letters and got away replies to Merle, Aunty, Norma Goodacre who sent me a nice little parcel, and Pat Thornton, one of the girls at NST (incidentally Col Ayres' fiancée) from whom I received a nice Xmas card. Tonight after answering your letter, I intend answering two letters from South Africa that have just come to hand - if I ever get engaged or married, I'll be able to sell my little address book for a good price.

I hope you took the money required for the various gifts from one of my allotments - counting my allotment which goes in the Bank at home, and what I put in the bank onboard, I'm becoming a real plutocrat these days, but I'm looking forward to the time when my first THOUSAND comes up; I don't think it will be terribly long and they say, don't they, that the first thou. is the hardest. I'm only modest and will be ready to stop when I get hold of <u>ten</u> of them!!! What price two lottery wins - that'd be the easiest way, perhaps.

So Geoff. Bush is the latest lamb led to the slaughter - I tell you Mother, it makes me feel a "veteran bachelor". Ever remember me talking about Johnny

[1] On 15th Dec, Shropshire, alongside HMA Ships Australia, Arunta and Warramunga bombarded Japanese positions, while HMAS Westralia landed troops at Arawe.

Bliss in the club, who played the Sax. when I first got the Sunday night dance going. I haven't seen him for about two years, and talking casually to one of the boys this afternoon, I find he is a mutual acquaintance, and he imparted the news that not only is Johnny married, but has begun the family already - well!

That was a shock to read the clipping about Jimmy Reilly and see his photo in the famous old Reilly grin - Jimmy was one of those guys that always seem eternal, he was always bubbling over, was always the centre of an admiring and laughing crowd and his personality thrived on limelight. However, it just goes to show that a man's "number" can go up whether it's front line or just spare time pleasure.[2] He'll be spoken of at Bronte Club while ever there is one of the present generation of club members living; I knew his wife quite well, poor soul and he had a little daughter. It's a sad old world, but if I could leave behind such an evergreen personality as Jim Reilly's I'd feel satisfied with my stay.

I would have liked to send a card to the Traceys but we have not had any available - my effort was made with a few telegrams. I understand what you mean about Jackie Chalk - did you recommend him to our "pet" fortune-teller?

Merle told me about making up the blue dress for you and I am anxious to see it as it should suit you very nicely. And our Perce reckons I should eat 1 lb. of dried fruit per day, does he. Well maybe he should take over the job of Director of Victualling for the Navy - if I eat a lb. of food daily I'm not doing badly - where in the heck does he think I'd stow my private stock - in my "cabin"?

Some more ancient mail arrived on board, including one of yours dated 2nd June - there was also one from Mrs. Marris, and one from Bill Marshal who I had abused for not writing to me. His letter is also dated June, a six pager, and in spite of being old, still had some info. that was news to me. He tells me among other things, that Vic Adams wife had at that stage presented him with his THIRD baby - considering he's only about 18 months older than me, he's doing a good job of populating Australia and is a fine example to his younger brother Howard, and the other juniors in the club, isn't he? He's also in the A.I.F. so I'd say he was doing a pretty good War effort - I should be ashamed of

[2]Jim Reilly was killed in Dec. 1943 when his bicycle collided with a telegraph post. One of Australia's best swimmers and surf-lifesavers, he won the Australian surf open championship in 1936 as well as hundreds of other club and carnival titles.

my modest part. By the way, how is the position on the Newsway-Morris front and what are the selected names for the infant, male or female.

Oh, before I forget - I have received one of the Sunday newspapers you sent - maybe a few more will arrive after Xmas. A great boon to me is the weekly newsletter I receive from Mr. Pearson which keeps me more or less up to date with local news and scandal.

Don't be worried about me training myself too fine, with this boxing etc. I have now reached a stage where I can't lose any more weight, and I feel fitter than I have at any stage since joining the R.A.N. My tummy is good and hard now and my figure is once again beginning to resemble that of an athlete. It's my firm assurance that once I get back to normal climate and living conditions, my weight will zoom straight up to 12 stone - however, that remains to be seen. Taken all round, I'm enjoying life in spite of not having been ashore for over 7 weeks - my longest stretch on the water. I think what appeals most to me, is the unconventional rig I sneak around in all day. Except for Sunday church, there is no dressing up whatever - week-days I just wear khaki shorts (which I have washed almost white) and toe-less sandals - nothing else. Thus my dhobying presents very little problem - shorts and towel, twice a week - 1 shirt and 1 pair socks per week - that's not too hard is it. Someone got down on those navy blue shorts I had when I was home, much to my disgust, but one of the fellows made me another pair of blue shorts with a little fob pocket and they are quite suitable for training purposes.

I was having a yarn with Alan Pickup about Des Watts and this Dot Long you've mentioned - Alan knows them both well, but tells me that Des is engaged to a girl named Dot Porter, so I guess you must have misunderstood Mrs. Long's talk about her son-in-law to be. Said Alan Pickup used to go to school in Canowindra with Ted Goodacre, the one I said came from Cudal - it's sure a small country.

When you're talking to Mrs. Chalk next time, ask her if Jackie left behind any of his Petty Officer's badges - the cap badges and if gold the arm badge (crossed hooks & crown) and especially if any gold Long Service "stripes" - she'll know what I mean. You see, I'll be due for my first Long Service Badge (i.e. "stripe") at the end of February, and of course want a couple of gold ones for my various uniforms. Also I have entered my name as a candidate for the Petty

Officers' examination on 6th March, and if I should per chance pass, I'll be wanting some P.O.'s badges - some style then, eh!

As you probably know, I'm not happy unless I'm scheming something, so seeing that above exams are coming off so soon, I thought I'd be a starter, and consequently am finding myself embroiled in a fair amount of study, so I'll be in a position to have a show. There is a Ship's Office Paper, Captain's Office paper, Arithmetic, English and typing, and shorthand is optional - I may take it if I can brush up in time. Of course you'll be wondering about the commission that I have been recommended for - well, I look at it this-a-way. It may be yet another six months before I go before the Board for final approval - then I wait for a vacancy in a course going through at you-know-where; that course takes three months, so I'd be lucky to get my commission, providing I passed everything by next Xmas. I think I'd have to do 18 months as a Subby before I'd become a Lieut., and frankly a Subby's pay is not so hot (I'd be better off financially as a P.O.) and I'd eat my hat if this strife lasts another 2½ years. Therefore it looks like I'll make the serious effort to get the rating of P.O. It will only be about a quid a fortnight more than I am getting now, but there are a lot of privileges that would be well worth having.

However, on with my scheming - as you may or may not know, I have had no practical experience in Captain's Office, therefore would be at a certain disadvantage in doing an exam. paper on that subject. Approaching the matter seriously, I have it all just about sewed up, that Col Curtis and I swop jobs first thing in the New Year, so that I can get my experience in that Office. At anyrate, I'm getting a bit sick of my present co-workers in Ship's Office, and need a change. The idea of the powers-that-be, is that I should remain there for just three months, but there again I have other ideas on the subject.

Once more my scheming old "brain" has been at work and I have a definite nibble at a bait. My idea is to arrange a draft off this here ship - not to shore, but to another class of ship. Not that this ship is too bad, but it would be fine experience for me and I'm all for a change, and I'm looking forward and hoping everything can be arranged, so don't be terribly surprised if one day a letter comes from me, bearing a different ship name to the one you have been used to. The idea is that I work an exchange with another chap with an equivalent rating to mine, and we simply swop ships and jobs - nice work if it comes off. There are a few little points "in the air" at present, and nothing has been done

officially yet, but I have great hopes - don't I have fun? May get results within a month.

Another scheme I've been mulling over, I broached in my previous letter - the matter of buying a cottage in the Eastern Subs. - say Waverley or Bronte for preference, but Randwick, Kingsford, Daceyville or Maroubra wouldn't be too bad. You know that block of land at the back of Connolly's, that is owned I think by the Tuohy's - wonder what they want for it. Do you reckon it would be worth while building a place there - that would certainly answer my desire as far as locality goes. I don't want you to do anything definite yet, unless of course you see real course for action, but it's just something to keep in mind, and will give you a mild interest for thought, as it does for me.

Well Mother dear, I seem to have got a lot off my chest this evening, and lets hope it isn't so very long before we can have a yarn about some of these matters. Just the same, I would like to know what your views are whenever you next write. Cheery pip,

Your loving son,
Jim

P.S. Wish you'd taught Merle to spell when she was smaller - words like "any-think' and "cubbard" revolt my delicate temperament??

Letter No. 8

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
28th Dec., 1943

Mom Dear,

Glad to receive your No. 8 and read all about your doings. I really think that you're doing plenty without the hospital visiting - regular visiting at anyrate - so don't let yourself get trapped into being a nice kind soul because it's not very cheerful business and is bad enough when you have to do it for your own.

I was interested to read about you meeting one of our fellows at anyrate, although he wasn't one I knew very well. However, it seems to stink that he knows Peter's girl and you know what I think about her - I'd trust her just about as far as I could throw Claroma Flats.

You've got me wondering where Pinto is now, but I suppose I'll hear from him in his own good time - leave him alone to work some "whiz" move. I had a Xmas card from Bubbles but can't reply as I don't even know her married name, much less her address. Be nice if you have the Bains over at Perce's place to entertain them - I think we'll have to use his home as headquarters.

Had a nice calendar from Mr. and Mrs. Marris for Xmas and as it's the only one I have for '44, it will come in very handy. Also got a special Xmas Airgraph from the girl in South Africa - there'll come a day soon when I'll start hoping I don't get any letters. Also got one from a Nurse in England - I might have mentioned her as being a cousin of one of the girls at work and was a very good correspondent of mine.

Don't know what to write about this time, and this letter will just signify that I'm still going - I don't feel much like writing a letter either, so you'll have to pardon the poor effort.

Conditions weren't even satisfactory to have the special Xmas fare that I

know they have on board for us, and what we actually had for Xmas dinner was tinned steak and kid. pie - I'm not particularly fond of it. Pudding consisted of rice with a few sultanas thrown in for good measure.[3]

No doubt you've been wondering whether I've been battered to bits in the boxing tournament finals, but said boxing has been deferred until more propitious time and place.

My study for the forthcoming exam is coming along quite nicely and if I can keep my present programme going, I should have a good show of passing.

Almost forgot - quite a surprise to have a Xmas card from "Billie", I would have thought she'd have forgotten about me by now. No word from Goodie for about 5 weeks so I don't know what I've done to offend her - but one way or the other it won't worry me much.

I've done nothing further about the transfer I mentioned but I've got the matter well in mind, and hope it goes through within a month or so.

That just about runs me flat this time Mum, so cheerio till next time, and give my best to all the folks.

Your loving son,
Jim

P.S. Please thank Marrises for my calendar - I meant to write but can't locate their address.

[3]On Boxing Day, 26 Dec, HMA Ships Australia, Shropshire, Arunta and Warramunga bombarded enemy targets at Cape Gloucester, New Britain, in preparation for Allied landings. Over the course of 80 minutes, the four vessels expended over 700 rounds of 8-inch, nearly 900 rounds of 4.7 inch, and nearly 100 rounds of 4-inch ammunition. By the end of the day, 12,500 troops and 7600 tons of supplies had been landed at Cape Gloucester.

Letter No. 9

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
2nd January, 1944

Mom Dear,

Big day for me today - your parcel and your letter written on Xmas night arrived - right now while typing I am busily munching the muscatel raisins which are delicious. Opening the parcel was good fun because I didn't know what would come next - the seedless raisins I have put in that glass jar and will just take a couple at a time before breakfast in the morning. I had to laugh at the "Vegetized Salt" - I don't even know how to eat the stuff but presume it goes on food just like ordinary salt - the funny part is the inscription on the packet "banishes the unnatural craving for common salt!" Have you ever known me to have such a craving - no, and not even now. However, to humour Percy I'll carry it with me to meals and strew it over my "scran".

I was really sad to find that beautiful watch strap in the parcel, because I now have no watch with me, and haven't worn one for well over a month. I thought I told you that the old watch had broken down and the "experts" onboard were unable to fix. It is a lovely strap of its kind, and I'll hang tight to it until I can attach it to my good watch at home; I hope it is still going okay.

Glad you like the black kid gloves bought you as my Xmas present, and as a matter of fact I just left it to her discretion and this is the first I've heard about what she got you. Wal seems to be coming good of late - what come over him, he's doing the big generous farmer act. Wish he could send me some fresh fruit, and some nice greens too.

Amusing to read about you dropping in at the Newsways - even young Betty is a bit of a hard doer, but wouldn't you prefer her way of waiting the big event to the way some women carry on? As it's only the 2nd day in the new year, it isn't unnatural that I should look back on the last New Year that I celebrated - that was 1940 at the Log Cabin Penrith. There were 6 of us - Bill Marshall and

Pauline, now married - "Dolly" Dalton, killed in action, young Betty probably a Mother by now, myself on the ocean quite a distance from that "Log Cabin" and Gwen - well she's sort of drifted a lot since then. Speaking of Bill Marshall, the R.C. padre onboard knows him, and Des Watts very well and I had a yarn with him the other day. Quite a nice chap, youngish and the sporting type - believe he lives in Fern Street - name is Roche.

The chap Coward I mentioned in a previous letter isn't one of those that used to go to church. I think the day for finals of boxing has been definitely set now and Tuesday should see me doing my stuff - I'm going to get one of the lads to take a couple of photos of me in the ring so that you'll be able to see how I look and how I shape.

Letter also arrived from the old Pinto today, and he told me about his marvellous new job, by which he gets home every night and every week-end - isn't he a skite. He tells me that he sold that historic engagement ring of his for £90 - must have been quite a "rock" - I can't remember ever seeing it - looks like he's a confirmed bach. now, eh? Said he spoke to Perce about selling the Vauxhall but Perce's price was a trifle too high for him.

The Chief passed me a "Pix" dated 18th Dec. to read tonight, and I noticed in it a photo of Van Capp - appears she has a good job with some engineering firm for the duration. Not a very good photo, but she looks quite nice and I'd like to have a yarn with her some time. Note they don't use her married name!

By the way, that transfer of mine to another ship is definitely shelved now - or at least I'm pretty sure it is. That's an explanation that will keep till I get home.

At last I can actually tell you some news - the Naval Board have given us permission to say that we were in the recent shows at Arawe, in New Britain and also at Cape Gloucester, New Britain.[4]

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[4]The New Britain (Territory of New Guinea) campaign was initiated by the Allies in late 1943 as a part of a major northward offensive which aimed to neutralise the important Japanese base at Rabaul, the capital of New Britain which had been captured from Australia in January 1942. By 1943, there were more than 100,000 Japanese military and civilian personal on New Britain, as well as a network of 4 airfields which could accommodate 265 fighters and 166 bombers. The initial phase which Jim describes involved naval and air support for US forces landing and securing bases around Arawe and Cape Gloucester.

With the aid of Percy and Tom, I suppose you had deduced that much at anyrate, and hope you weren't worried unduly about me. Actually there wasn't a great deal of excitement, but perhaps we were a little lucky. At anyrate, I've opened that bottle of Phosperine I had by me just to make sure my nerves were okay. The worst part of it is the lack of sleep, and the fact that while we are in such close vicinity to the enemy we can't just get around in shorts etc. and we hardly have an inch of skin showing when we are going into action - a hood over our face and head like a balaclava, and big white gauntlets, so we won't get burns. That's a very necessary precaution as we realize, but that doesn't stop it being very hot, and it's very trying when closed up at night.

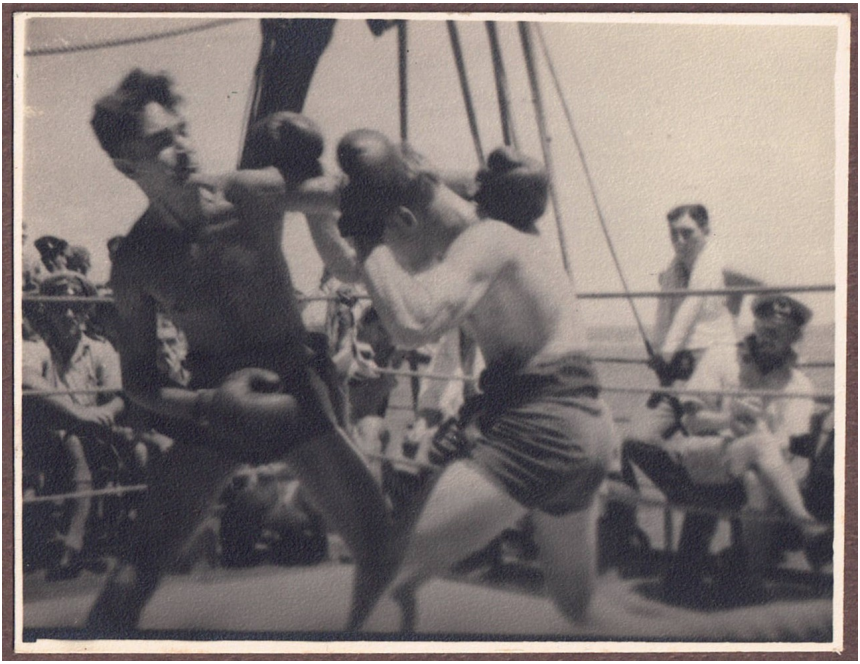
We just stooged around as covering force at the Arawe business but at Cape Gloucester, we did our share of "noise-making". The landing craft and barges stood out a bit until we had given the joint a bit of a pounding, and then in they went and it looked a fine sight to see them all move in. Our aircraft did a good job too, and they look fine as they swooped in to unload their "eggs" for the Nippo's breakfast. I might mention that we had breakfast, just where ever our action stations were that morning once the first excitement was over - it also was eggs - however, the first one I opened smelt a little doubtful and it must have left it's smell in our noses, because we looked with a pretty jaundiced eye at the rest of them after that, and finished up having bread and butter only. By that time, reports had gone through that things ashore were going okay, so we felt pretty pleased with things in general. By the way, I think the whole attack was pretty much of a surprise to our little yellow friends, so we were also very pleased about that part too.

This afternoon, one of the events previously promised for Xmas day took place - the exhibition of art and handicrafts. There were models of warships, paintings, sketches etc. and also a model sail boat just like that one of mine on the radio at home. Altogether a very creditable collection, and shows there is quite a lot of talent with us.

Well Mumsie, I think that's just about the issue for this time, so cheerio and regards to the folks.

Your loving son,

Jim



Jim's boxing match on Shropshire, which resulted in a black eye, 1943-44 (Jim Yeomans)

Letter No. 10

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
8th January, 1944

Mom Dear,

Received your letter written on New Year's Day at Vaucluse, but am addressing letters to home as usual, because I'm not sure just how long you are staying with Percy. By the way, I wrote to Perce on the 11th December and to date it hasn't been mentioned by you or replied to by him, so I was wondering whether it had arrived.

No doubt about Pinto ringing you so early in the a.m. New Year's morning, he must have been determined to get in first – he does get some funny ideas doesn't he. Good job he knew where you were: he'd have been unpopular with Merle if he'd rung there. It's nice to see that he's sticking close now that he is in Sydney in his cushy job, and I think you do like to see him and have a yarn occasionally, don't you? Fancy seeing the old George Mc at the Buffet – in my opinion he is one of the most entertaining blokes I know, and he can talk with equal ease to people of any age and manage to keep them amused. Unlike Pinto though, George is a little partial to his drop of "hops" but he holds it like a gentleman I think – how was he when you saw him? And George too is off the romance business – looks like the surf club having a nice little inner circle of bachelors doesn't it – Pinto tried to give me a hint in his letter where George was making for, but I didn't understand it until I saw your letter. I sincerely hope you told that villain McGrath to write to me Mum – he could win a prize with his letters even though they usually are pretty short.

I don't know the teacher you mentioned – "Bully" Larkin – "Bully" Hayes was the only one that it might possibly be. By the way, the Air-Graph you enclosed with your letter was a Xmas Greeting from Mrs. Marris' sister and niece, the Cubbins in Wallasey. By gee, that seems a long time ago and a long way away – I'd quite willingly start tomorrow for the same trip again though.

Remember me telling you in the last letter about seeing Van Gapp's photo in PIX – this week I noticed the photo of Olive Smith's eldest sister Jean – now Mrs. Hurt, married to one of my mates, Jack Hurt. I always seem to be able to find someone I know mentioned in nearly every local paper I get. By the way, your papers are coming through a little better now, and this week I also received a copy of Smith's and an English "Post" from the Marrises. Got a parcel from N.S.T. yesterday – only a small one, and I'm afraid hardly suited to this climate. Six blocks of Small's "Club" chocolate, a tin of boot polish and some chewie. I'm afraid we have no desire for chocolate up here – dried fruit is much better, and as for the boot polish – I must have nearly ½ dozen tins packed away in my locker, and in any case, as you might have gathered from my letters, toeless sandals are my daily foot-wear, and how I love them too – shoes are worn once a week, that is if we happen to go to church on Sunday.

There is rather a funny situation onboard now as regards a shortage of matches – hardly anyone has them, and as soon as a chap lights up, he is immediately enveloped in a swarm of others who have just been waiting to get a light off someone else's cigarette. I've seen blokes wandering round for ten minutes trying to get a light.

Probably Bubs or Merle have told you about my boxing bout – I'm very disappointed to report a defeat. It appears that my form was much below the standard my supporters expected and those that spoke to me about it later on said they were very disappointed in the way I shaped – they said I looked as if I had no confidence. That can't have been the trouble because I was nearly sure of being able to beat this fellow, but I guess something went wrong, and I just didn't seem to get going.

He was ½ stone heavier and had a better reach than me, but I still should have tossed him. At anyrate, I didn't suffer any severe damage, so I suppose that at least is something – as a matter of fact I was talking to my opponent this afternoon and he showed me a bruise on the bottom of his ribs and wanted to know if I had a brick in my glove when we were fighting.

Had a letter from Norma Goodacre and she tells me that at a dance at Marrickville Town Hall, she met of all people, Lyn Waller – that's a turn up isn't it? You remember him as the lad I used to go round with in Melbourne. So he must be in or around Sydney now.

Still not a great deal to write about Mum – over 10 weeks now since I was ashore – if it's not remedied soon I think some of us will burst. I'll bet there's a bust when we do get ashore in some civilised place.

Cheerio for now, your loving son,
Jim

P.S. No sign of any parcel from the Randwick Auxiliary?

The entertaining, charming, George McGrath (Australian War Memorial)

Letter No. 11

S.5294
Ldg Wtr J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
15th January, 1944

Mom Dear,

I should sight a letter from you tomorrow, so I'll get my part of the business written and will then be ready to reply as necessary after reading yours.

There seems to be even less news than usual, and, you guessed it – I still haven't been ashore! Quite close to being a record for a whole ships' company to remain on the ship so long. Probably it's all for the best that we do stay aboard, but as it's close on 3 months now it's getting a little wearisome. Since last writing, I met my next opponent in the Crib competition and this time, I went down. We played 3 games, and my opponent won the last 2 – so I'm out of that now.

However, I've had one little spot of luck – last Saturday, the first "Radio Questionnaire" of 20 general knowledge questions was asked over the ships' loud speaker system, and it was announced the next morning that I ran 2nd and so was entitled to 5/- - all grist to the mill. Questions asked included name of the nearest "pub" in London to Australia House, name of Australian girl star in "40,000 Horsemen" (Betty Bryant) and the age of one well known seaman onboard – I only guessed it at "43" – I was right.

That same night, my team had their first encounter in the Quiz Competition and we won by a narrow margin. Some of the questions were too tough for us and there were some good trick questions too. This Quiz Contest is also a knock-out comp. and we are hopeful of final victory. It's worth a quid each if we win!

I'm afraid Bubs and Lofty will be disappointed in my prowess as a fisherman-but the line they sent up to me, hasn't hauled up a fish of any sort yet. A few days ago, a party went out in the ships pinnace, armed with the queerest fish-

ing tackle you could imagine – including explosives – but their catch was pretty small and we didn't see anything of the cooked results. So I don't think it's a good season, or something.

Once again the weather has intruded sufficiently to become a topic – every night for a week, I've been awakened as I slept on the upper deck, by rain. And unfortunately, it's not the gentle rain like we know it at home – there have been times when I've been soaked through before I could get up and don my sandals. However I'm ever optimistic and always try the upper deck hoping for the best, rather than "stew" and that's the right word, down below.

That transfer I spoke about from Ships' to Captains' Office hasn't eventuated yet, but I think will take place next week. I want to gain a little experience round there to assist me when I sit for my exam in March.

My own health is still pretty fair, although I've eased up on the physical training after the Boxing finished – I would love a swim though – sounds funny, doesn't it, what with "water, water everywhere".

16-1-44 – 'Fraid the expected mail didn't materialise, so this letter will have to go as it is. A new writer came onboard today, to replace one that has been drafted to his Home Depot. I didn't know him previously but Col Curtis did and between us we'll have to show him the ropes as it's his first ship...I'm an old "veteran" now aren't I?

Well that's all for now Mum – I'm still doing alright (comparatively) and there's absolutely no grounds for you to worry about me. Why in peace-time, people pay fabulous sums to go "cruising" in these parts as we are – that's money that I'll save at anyrate.

Cheer-oh – Your loving son,
Jim

Poker was popular with the crew of Shropshire and leisure hours. This photo was taken after the ship's successful attack against Japanese positions in Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea, May 1944 (Australian War Memorial, 017145)

Owing to the intense heat in the tropics, and in order to be near their battle stations, crew slept on the deck during the ship's attack on Japanese positions in Hollandia, May 1944 (Australian War Memorial, 017143)

Letter to Jim from his Welsh girlfriend, Dean

16th January, 1944

My Dearest Jim,

Many thanks for the parcel. You have always been so good to me Jim, I can't express how I appreciate your kindness. However, I guess you know how I feel. Well Darling, I haven't received any letters from you for about 3 months, I was beginning to think you had crossed me off your mailing list for good. Lorrie had your Christmas Card the same day I received mine.

Everything goes on much the same, the usual monotonous round. Gosh! I'm really browned off. Miss you quite a lot. Did I tell you Eric had now been promoted to Flight-Sgt. Dorothy never corresponds with him now. Lorrie has a new friend he is very much in love with her and believe me, it is certainly the real thing this time. Did you have a jolly Xmas? Hope you managed to spend it at home. I had an exceedingly dull time, but did I make up for it at New Year. Have you been dancing since you got back? What is the latest hit song down under? You know dear, everytime I think of you I could sit down and howl. I've often asked myself why, maybe because I realise I've lost the best friend anyone could possibly have. I promise you this darling I will never forget you. I'm afraid this is a frightfully poor effort.

I have to be in the right mood for letter writing so please accept my most humble apology. We're having dreadful weather raining and awfully cold. Lucky you, sunshine everyday. How is everyone at your home? Is your nephew improved any? Well Darling I could kick myself for not being able to write you a long interesting letter. My brain refuses to co-operate. I will write again soon. Cheerio Darling

Lots of love. I still think of you as Big Ben chimes 9 o'clock on the wireless. Kind regards from Lorrie and Dorothy. Once again I take this opportunity of thanking you for everything.

Absolutely yours,
Dean

Letter No. 1

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
13th February, 1944

Mom Dear,

Here comes my first letter in Series 3 - I've certainly typed and scrawled a few screeds in the last few years haven't I? There isn't a great deal to tell this time, naturally, but I'll garnish it as much as I can.

Firstly, the age of wonders hasn't ceased - I actually shifted my personal gear from Ship's Office to Captain's Office this afternoon and tomorrow start learning the trade of that part of the business. As my exam. comes off three weeks from tomorrow, I'll really have to take the job very seriously and make myself very annoying by asking a devil of a lot of inane questions if I am to have some idea of the practical side of that paper. For the past three weeks of course, I haven't done any study in connection with the exam. so my time will be fully occupied, with no time off through the day for taking "naps" if I am to have a show. I also want to brush up on my Shorthand so that I can take it as an extra subject. I'll be able to keep up my weekly letter to you, but will let all others slide I think, so tell Merle and Bubs to be patient if they don't get any letters for a while. Honestly speaking, I think I'll have to either tip the paper or get one that suits me in order to make the grade.

A rather funny incident, worthy of recording occurred a couple of days ago - we were rolling along in good style, and my offsider and I were sitting peaceably in the office relaxing and perhaps dozing a little, when suddenly I heard a great "whoosh" and a deluge of water rushed through the port-hole and caught the other fellow properly. The unexpectedness of it all and the coolness of the water simply took his breath away at first and he just shook the water off and spluttered, but when he got his breath ... whew! Of course, I made matters worse for him by laughing fit to bust and he certainly did look comical. We then had to set to in order to make the place habitable.

Already I've lost most of the tan that I acquired in my trips to the beach and at the picnic last Sunday - just sweated it away. This afternoon, I thought I'd make the effort and tidy up and organize my locker a little. My locker is in the Capstan engine compartment and was it hot - must have been something like 130 degrees. I stood it for about ten minutes, but when I started to move the white stuff, shirts etc. I found that my sweat was just drenching them and doing the clean shirts no good at all, so I gave up and will complete the job in small doses.

Taken all round, I'm quite happy in a tin-pot sort of a way and have practically gotten over the home-sick miseries that usually come during the first couple of days. I've got quite a substantial private larder with my dried fruit, jam and cake etc. so will be okay in that direction for a while yet.

The boys have been regaling me with accounts of the Ship's Company dance that was held last Friday week at Graces Auditorium and from all accounts a grand time was had by all. Entrance was free and beer was also there in large quantities also free. The whole affair was paid out of the Ship's Fund and I believe the cost ran well over the £100 mark - I was a bit dubious about how the girl friend would take it as the lads would get pretty rowdy, but I believe they behaved very well on this occasion, so I might make the effort for the next turnout that's put on.

That's about the lot for this time Mum, but I expect I'll have a letter from you before many days, and will bring you up to date then. How is the interior decorating going?

Till next time, Your loving son,
Jim

Letter No. 2

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
20th February, 1944

Mom Dear,

Today finds me not very happy for a variety of reasons, but the main one is a really champion cold that I am looking after very well. For some unknown reason, my nose leaks all over the place, and so far today half a dozen good hankies have been soddened in trying to stem the flood.

I had a slight cough yesterday morning, and yesterday afternoon I decided to make my first visit to the shore to have a look around. My transport to the shore, unfortunately, was an open boat; to wit, our pinnace, and we had no sooner left the ship than wham! – a rain squall hit us, and in 2 minutes we were properly soaked. In another 5 minutes along came the sun, but it took us a couple of hours to dry out completely, and I think that is the cause of my suffering today, and last night.

To continue about my excursion ashore – there wasn't anything to do, but I'd heard there was a Canteen a couple of miles inland, so got a lift there in a "jeep". Unluckily the canteen didn't open till 3.30 and I was supposed to catch a boat back to the ship at 3.15 – a Naval officer had promised to send a truck to pick up 3 of us.

As canteen wasn't open, we walked around a bit and took a look at the scenery – such as it was. Take away the grass and the palm trees and there'd be nothing left to see. There were some very nice stag-horns growing on the palms that you would like to have.

Walking along peaceably, we just escaped being slapped down by a falling nut and had the idea of putting in time by chewing cocoa-nut, but we were too optimistic as without the help of a knife, we couldn't even get the husk off it.

We thought we'd best get back to the canteen to be on hand for our truck and while waiting, watched a big crowd participating in the unofficial "National Game" of Australia – it's played with 8 pennies, know what I mean? However, our promised truck didn't arrive by 3.15 so we "hitched" our way back in blitz buggies, jeeps and utility trucks. We got a note from the Officers who promised the truck and so were okay when we had to explain our absence on the ship.

Just after supper, when I was settling down to a little study, it dawned on me that I was in for a beaut cold, so took some eucalyptus in sugar, and before turning in had a hot malted milk of my own making and then a hot wash to bring the sweat up even more.

Well naturally I couldn't risk a breeze on the upper deck, so I bedded down below decks, wrapped in my little sheet (which has been very handy) and then did I sweat? In no time my pajamas and the sheet were soaked, but do you think I could sleep? I just couldn't get comfortable all the time rivulets of sweat were trickling all over my body. This morning I felt very weak and the cold was worse and how my nose ran. I went along to see the Dr who made me drink some poison brew, and they squirted some smelly liquid up my nostrils – altogether I'm having a crook trot!

On top of that, - this! You'll remember I mentioned in my last letter that I was about to change over to Captain's office – well I did and for 4 days was very happy settling down there and picking up the new job. Then what should happen, but the Captain's Secretary gets appendicitis and in the general shuffle-round, I am put back in Ship's Office. That nearly got me down – however there's a chance that I may yet go back to Capt's Office next week, when the relief Captain's Secretary has settled down, so don't miss the next thrilling episode.

For the rest of my doings – study has taken a great deal of my time but there's a lot to be learnt, so I must cram furiously for the next fortnight.

I had a letter (or rather an Airgraph) from Col Ayres (my N.S.T. pal) during the week, and he seemed to be dashing round England and Scotland and having much fun – I'd like to swap places or better still, be there with him. I'll be very surprised if I don't manage to get back there some fine day.

That's about the lot for now I think – I've opened that fig jam, by the way

and it was just starting to crystallize on top. That cake Merle made is down to the last slice, but I don't want her to go to all the trouble of sending another – not yet at anyrate.

Take no notice of my moans, I must work it off on someone as nobody on the ship extends much sympathy. I guess I'll be okay before you get this letter.

Love,
Jim

Multiple Pom-Poms firing from HMAS Shropshire during the allied naval attack on Hollandia, May 1944 (Australian War Memorial, 017136)

Letter No. 3

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
27th February, 1944

Mom Dear,

Received your letter No.1 dated 13th earlier in the week but up till now haven't had the opportunity of getting a letter away - however, the only incident to give me something to write about occurred today, so it's for the best.

By the sound of your letter, you don't appreciate the return of your prodigal son-in-law, with his exercise books and all, so with that gentleman in the house, it won't be so hard to tear yourself away and look after Bub's establishment. I'm still in favour of her going ahead with her scheme, although it's bound to present snags to all of us as it progresses. In the Winter I won't mind so much having to make a temporary home out there, but when the summer comes I think you can count me out, and I'll do my best to get a billet near our beach. A lot of things can happen before then I suppose - the only trouble is that my time at sea must be nearly drawing to a close. I've got no desire at all to go on shore again, and intend putting in a request to the Captain to have a letter written recommending me as a volunteer for further sea service! If I should pass this exam. I don't anticipate being made a Petty Officer before July, but when that happens (if I pass) I'm a certainty to get a draft, as there is already one P.O. Writer aboard and that's all we can have. However, he's only been married fairly recently and isn't particularly keen on staying at sea, I don't think, so when the time comes I may manage to swop with him, so that I can stay.

Don't suppose you are likely to have much success in your search for our little cottage, but it's just as well to keep your eyes open for a "good buy" I suppose. Personally I don't want to go out of the district, but I suppose property round our way brings a pretty good price these days. However, while I'm on this present job my Bank A/c shows a steady increase and with the aid of a small loan from a certain person up in the chips, I may be able to run to a place that

has everything I want, and not just a "this'll do place" which I wouldn't be very proud to own.

Just this minute got your letter No.2 dated 20th, so I can "kill two birds with one stone" tonight! Not much to answer in it, but glad to know Erskine Allison is home, and that makes someone happy at anyrate. I too, think of Perce quite a lot and also pray that he remains safe and well, and feel that it is such a shame that I have really benefited from the War as far as experiences go, and don't suppose I'm any worse off financially, so can not complain, whereas poor Perce has had the sticky end of the business, and even before being taken prisoner he had nothing to make him very joyful.[5] We can only hope for him. Speaking of Mrs. Marris, I hope you told her that I received the Smith's Weeklies they sent, and also the calendar for Xmas.

The Airgraph you enclosed with your first letter was from Dean, dated 10th January, to say that she received the card and calendar that I sent her for Xmas when I was home the first time. I suppose I'll have acknowledgments from the others in due course.

By the way, before I forget - the State Surf Champ'ships are held on 12th March and I'll be on tenterhooks until I see the results, so don't just send the Sunday paper - get hold of all the clippings of the results and the report on it from the papers including the TRUTH and enclose them in your Airmail letter, so that I won't be kept in suspense. No doubt you can wring an account of the doings out of Pinto or if he calls you before then make him promise to give you the details - I don't trust him to send them.

Forgot to tell you in my last letter, that I bumped into the very bloke we were discussing on my last leave - Lyn Waller. He's got a ship at last, but as it doesn't carry a Dentist, he had to come over to us to have his fangs attended to and looked me up at the same time, and we had quite a chin-wag. He looks much the same, full of grins, and told me about the wonderful leave he had, 42 days I think, after coming back from Darwin.

Another thing I forgot to mention in my last letter was that it won't be necessary for you to scrounge any "chewie" to send me - I managed, by what

[5] "Perce" here refers to Jim's cousin Perce Curvey who was being held as a P.O.W. by the Japanese.

means we won't discuss, to get hold of 72 packets - 1 box, that is, of Wrigley's Spearmint - mention that to Pinto and watch him go green! So I'm set for gum now for a couple of months at my usual rate of chewing.

During the week I finished off the Malted Milk (which was extra good cold), a bottle of fig jam and Merle's cake. However, I still have good stocks by me and even if the pusser packed up feeding us, I wouldn't starve with my larder. The food has been quite tolerable of late, although they still show the inclination to pump bully beef into us on the slightest pretext.

The horrible cold I complained of in my last letter is but a memory now, and the memory was revived today when I took the job of dhobying the hankies I had used. I also washed my pillow case today, and I guess the rough way I wring these things out is beginning to tell, because a few tell-tale frays have appeared in it, and it looks as if it's life is now limited. However, it will last till I get home. Haven't been game to tackle the washing of my sheet yet, and drying it is going to be my problem. Ten to one, I hang it on the upper deck on a nice sunny day and it will blow overboard.

Only discovered during the week that I'd been swotting unnecessarily hard, as my exam. deesn't come off until the 13th March and not the 6th as I had thought. My shorthand is on the improve and I'm anticipating that the marks from it may help my aggregate a little. You see, it is necessary to get 50% in each subject to pass, but also the marks must come to an aggregate of 360 out of 600, but the shorthand is an extra 50 marks and may make the difference between passing and failing to me. I've been covering the ground pretty well in the subjects I have to take, including Maths. and although just at present it seems like a solid undigested lump in my mind, I have high hopes that in the next fortnight I will have things pigeon-holed and know one from 'tother. It's only just now that I'm beginning to believe that after all, I might actually pass the exam - here's hoping.

The incident I mentioned earlier as having happened today, was nothing less than that I went "to the races". Yes, horse races, right here onboard. Of course the horses were only wooden ones, but we had a 1/- Tote and all the trimmings, and it was enough like the real thing for me to lose two bob on the afternoon's outing. I'll enclose a couple of the losing tote tickets as souvenirs of our first race meeting. I'll give you an idea how it was worked:- There were

twelve wooden horses complete with wooden jockeys, painted as bays, blacks and greys. They are lined up with a clear stretch of deck in front of them, and cord attached to each one onto a steel rod with a handle on it - as the handle is turned the cord winds round the rod and the horses move forward. If the cord overlaps itself, of course that horse moves faster than the others, and that how the business is worked. Well it was a picnic - barrier positions were picked before each race, and the bets laid, and everyone was round the track and clinging onto the superstructure to get a view of their hopeful. 90% of the money goes out in winnings and the other 10% goes to the ship's fund. (P.T.O.)

Of course the names of the horses wouldn't be found in most stud books, although one named "Burberry" won the first race. The "Burberry" referred to though, is the kind of over coat we wear, and pedigree was given as "by Pusser out of Slops". One with the uninviting name of "Sister's Peril" won the second and third races, and unfortunately in the second race, I thought he was my hope, and barracked him with all my might, and only when I went to collect my 9/- winnings I learnt that I'd had my optics on the wrong nag. My nag in this race had an argument with a knot-hole or something in the deck, and the top came away from the bottom part - that gave me good cause to tear my hair out. In the third race, I decided to back "Turn To" but got the numbers mixed, and instead found myself with a hack called "Windtied", by Windbag out of Ebbtide (or something) this called for more moaning on my part until the horse I had cantered in 2nd giving me back 2/- for my money, and the one I had previously selected is still coming. I couldn't find what horse W.Cook was riding in the last with the result that I took a blind stab and when last seen, this steed was talking to the steward's horse about 3 miles from the winning post. However, taking it all round, it was fun and I believe they aim to run a race meeting every week, weather and "other thing" permitting.

That closes my weekly matter for tonight Mother, and I think you've got your money's worth this time, in spite of the fact that I am supposed to be answering two letters.

So till next time, cheerio and as Mrs. Stang. used to say "God Bless" -

Your loving son,
Jim

Hands are washing down the decks of the cruiser HMAS Shropshire, before breakfast, during operations north of Dutch New Guinea, May 1944 (Australian War Memorial, 017132)

Letter No. 4

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
9th March, 1944

Mom Dear,

There's been no mail whatsoever since I last wrote to you, but thought you might be getting a bit restive if my usual letter didn't turn up, so am hoping this will be delivered in fairly good time.

As you might recollect, my exam. starts on Monday - if all goes well, and as much as circumstances have permitted, I have been hard at it, studying and hoping that I'm swotting the right things and also that I will remember most of what I read - I must admit that it is a bigger job than I could have imagined, but I'm not unduly pessimistic - yet!! Just as I did when I was going for school and Accountancy Exams. I have been taking the old "Fischer's" daily, and it has served for two purposes.

A gloomy feature of daily life for the past three or even four weeks, has been the almost absolute absence of sunlight, and I'm pretty certain that it has rained each and every night without fail - the result has been that I have had to "crash" between decks and do I perspire! Last night it was just about all I could do to get to sleep owing to the unlovely smell of my sheet, which has been quite wet almost every morning when I awoke, and up till today I haven't had much chance to dhoby it. I went to work on the laundry problem this afternoon, and in addition to the sheet, washed towel, long khaki gear, socks and hankies etc. and felt pretty washed out myself before I was through. It had ceased raining just before I finished my washing, so I hung them on a line on the upper deck, and fortunately there was a strong wind blowing that made the sheet billow out just like a sail. I kept anxious watch out the port-hole for approaching bad weather, and when it looked close went up top and kept right next to my gear. Otherwise, the rate it rains here, it would be soaked before I could run to it. Before the rain hit us, the sheet, hankies, and towel were dry, and I'm still wracking my brain as to what to do with the other stuff as the drying room is

full and not taking any more customers. As I've said before, washing day has it's serious problems on these here ships.

I went before the Captain this morning (no, not in trouble) to be officially awarded my First Good Conduct Badge which we are eligible for on completion of 3 years service with no "crimes" recorded. It seems a long way back to that first day I joined, doesn't it? This badge business entitles me to wear a chevron under the "hook" on my left arm, and also the magnificent rise in pay of 3d. per day - how shall I spend it all? I've ordered a couple of gold Good Conduct Badges from D.J.'s, but they said at the time that it would take 3 months to fill the order, so I'll remind you to pop in and ask about them in about 6 weeks time.

Just in case I can't get another letter away in time, and also in the event that I wont be able to send a telegram, I want to wish you "Many Happies" for you birthday on the 28th - only wish I could be home to fix up a nice party and a show for you - in any case, just remember that I'll be thinking of you specially that day.

While on birthdays, tell Percy that I didn't forget that his was yesterday, but under the circumstances I couldn't wire him or anything like that, but as soon as I get rid of this exam. I'll find time to write him a letter to wish him belated "Happy Returns". The same will probably apply to Kath's wedding, so ask her to take my good wishes etc. for granted.

Just in case you were wondering, I haven't been returned to the job in Captain's Office yet, and it looks very much as if I'll be staying in ship's office to close up yet another quarter's ledger at the end of this month. That will mean a couple of week's solid work so I hope to be able to have a little bit of a loaf between the end of the exam. and when that starts.

So far I haven't touched any more of your jams, and haven't opened that tin of peaches either, but they will go into a celebration next week. I'm pretty sure I forgot to tell you that I had a parcel from St. Mary's - I meant to tell you a couple of letters back, but am not sure whether I did. At anyrate, I received it early in February and it was marked "Do not open until Xmas" - but I took it to mean last Xmas so opened it and found a small tin of salmon, 1 tin plum pudding, 1 small tin of jam, and a small packet of cigarettes which were going

mouldy so I disposed of them out the scuttle. However, if any of the good folk up there question you about the arrival of parcel, you can tell them - Yes, but about a month late.

Well Mum, that just about let's me out, so till next time, regards to the home-folk, cheerio and love.

Your affectionate son,
Jim

Letter No. 5

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
13th March, 1944

Mom Dear,

Just a few words to let you know how your small son James is popping up, and also that mail has arrived, and that I have two of your letters, Nos. 3 dated 25/2/44 and 5 dated 6/3/44 ... so far, No. 4 is missing, but so are quite a few letters, and as I happen to have a good idea where they are, I'm not unduly alarmed, and probably they will turn up before I write again. Not only letters, but papers have arrived and they are complete to the 27th February - Merle will also be gratified to learn that her cake came to hand safely. As a matter of fact, I opened the cake this afternoon, and had a hunk of it by way of quiet celebration. Getting the adhesive tape off it was rather like a Laurel and Hardy comedy - I'd get the sticky tape on my fingers, get it off with the other hand and then have to start picking it off those entangled fingers - it took quite a bit of wangling to complete the operation. Also in regard to the cake, I felt terribly sorry to find poor Lofty's nail cutter wrapped up on top of it - why should you rob Lofty for my benefit? In any case I should think it more important for Lofty to keep up appearances than me. However, the real fact is that about a week or so ago I changed to a better locker, and of course in the course of removal turned everything upside down to shot out what I didn't want etc, and lo and behold my own nail clippers turned up okay! Therefore, Lofty will just have to wait patiently until I can return his clippers.

Firstly, I'll do the answering necessary for your letters, as I have only one topic of conversation. In your Letter No. 3, you seem to have things a little mixed - you say you're glad to know that I've shifted to "Ship's Office" - that's where I shifted from, but as you probably already know by now, I am once again back there - for how long I don't quite know. Notice that you went to see "Life begins at 8.30" with Mrs. Marris - remember the last time we went to the pictures with the Marris' we saw Monty Woolley - that time in "The Man

who came to Dinner". At any rate the other one should have been an agreeable show.

I don't know if you remember telling me about the chap on the Concert Party at the hospital who played tunes for each country - Spain "where there are bull-fighters" and America where there are no Bull-fighters. I guess you missed the point - America has no "Bull-fighter" now, because Woolcott-Forbes, whose nickname is the "Bullfighter" is now on trial in Sydney - do you get the idea? I was pleased to see the Parish Herald you sent me, although not for the reason you thought. I note you've marked the bit about the return of Erskine Allison, but what interested me most was about Laurie Ellis. You may remember, if you cast your mind back to October, 1942, that in my letter written on the ship on the way to America, I mentioned that one of the RAAF chaps onboard, a Sergeant Pilot Laurie Ellis, was an old mate of mine and a one time chorister and still acts as server occasionally. The "Herald" says that he has been awarded the DFC for coolness etc. and he brought his 4-engined bomber back finally with all engines out of action. He has also been promoted to Flight Lieutenant - so quite a lot has happened since we were on that ship.

Not much to answer in your letter No. 5, except that Bobbie appears to be shaping up for a let down some-where! By the way, I received that letter from South Africa that you posted on to me, from the girl in Durban to say that she had received that Calendar I sent, or rather you posted, before Xmas. Wrote me a long letter, so I'd better reply - never know when I might be back there again. There was another overseas letter in my mail, from a girl in Chelsea - London, sending a Xmas card - just a little late! That was all the mail I received, but there may be one or a couple of Bubs in the "missing mail" if she has written.

My only news is that I can now let down on the study - today was the big day!! This morning I did the Ship's Office Exam. paper - 15 questions in three hours, and I really had to "steam" to get through on time. In the afternoon I did the Captain's Office paper, 10 questions in 2½ hours. Both papers were more or less middling, neither hard nor easy, but I think that I had them both well enough taped to be pretty "cocky" about my chances of passing in both. I got a bit of a jolt when I opened the Captain's Office paper - for the past three exams. there have been 15 questions, in which only 5 were compulsory and a choice of 5 of the remaining 10 - this made it a little easier. Today I had no such choice and just had to dig in and do the lot. However, I think I did a satisfactory paper

and am not worrying unduly. It will probably be a couple of months before the results are officially announced. Tomorrow I am to do Maths., Typing and Shorthand, but don't think they will upset me. Don't think because of this that you will be seeing me in gold buttons etc. next time I come home on account of this though, because I will have to wait my turn on the roster, and I suppose I'm a very junior "leading hand". Makes me think, a little spitefully perhaps, that the fact of passing will put it over Ross and my dear sister-in-law, because I'll bet Ross didn't sit. It will shake her considerably if I get made a P.O. especially considering that he had plenty of opportunities and over a year's start on me. Aren't we cats?

Well, win or lose, I'm certainly glad to be able to quit study - for the last 6 weeks I've never been without a book in my hand and it hasn't been a library book either. I reckon that I didn't study as hard for Accountancy as I did this time - usually got in about 5 to 6 hours a day, so I deserve a reward and a spell don't you think. Now I can start getting books out of the ship's library, going to the pictures when they're held, and catch up a little on the piano. This trip I brought my manuscript books with me, and up to date haven't used them.

I think that is enough good news for one letter, so will let you know how I went in the other subjects in another letter this week. By the way, the rain is still with us, but last night very fortunately was fine, and I got that all important restful night's sleep prior to the examination - lucky wasn't it?

My regards to the folks, and tell Bubs I'll drop her a personal note later in the week when I recuperate a little more.

Your loving son,
Jim

Letter No. 6

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
17th March, 1944

Mom Dear,

This should reach you in time to wish you "Many Happy Returns of the 28th" and I'm enclosing a little cheque for a couple of quid so that you can buy yourself something from your young son. My idea is for something more or less lasting, and I thought that with the place newly painted and papered etc. a nice bright little painting or a good "print" of a picture by a good painter might find a place, since you have taken down a couple of the old ones that were looking a little drab. However, it's your present, so do just as you like and let me know in due course what the result is.

Since last writing, I have received your missing No.4 of March 1st and also No. 6 dated 10th. My newspapers are also complete to 5th March, so that's pretty satisfactory. I'm sure everything looks very nice now with the painting completed, and the bath-room in "duck-egg blue" and cream must look the goods. ~~Too bad your son-in-law is beginning once again to "get in your hair"~~ but I suppose you'll have to write that off to "war effort". I wouldn't want you to worry about a cake for my birthday ... let cakes wait until I get home, unless I particularly ask for one. If anyone gets mad with the cooking and wants to send anything, I'd welcome some nice little biscuits - the old nutty ones like "Anzacs" or the coconut ones - whatever you can manage!

That "amazing creature" Pinto, actually did write to me and told me all about sneaking another trophy down at the club. He's a very unsatisfactory correspondent though - mentioned about enclosing a paper clipping that would interest me - some dirt about his Ashbury friends, I think - and there was a polite note from the censor that said cutting was not enclosed when opened by Censor. So my curiosity is aroused now, and I'll go very crook when I write. Contrary to your supposition, he told me nothing at all about Bubbles being in camp at Killara etc. and I'll have something to say about that too.

Thanks for giving Percy tobacco for his birthday - I wanted him to have it, and will write him tomorrow perhaps. Must keep in sweet with him, because if this cottage that Lawrence was telling you about is worth buying, he might lend me £600 which I could pay him back at a tenner a month, and he might skip the interest or accept very little. I won't broach the matter to him until you find the "right place". You know how much cash I have if there is anything doing, and you can draw on the joint account if a couple of hundred is needed in a hurry. The fact of a tenant being in at present wouldn't matter much as the rent would be incoming, but I want to pay for it in cash, so that there'd be no interest "slug" if Perce would come across with the loan.

I see that you've been hob-nobbing with the Tait's and that Bet has got herself engaged. If she's anything like I'm told, she certainly disappointed everyone in her first promise of personality and high spirits, hasn't she?

Very interested to read the plans of the Returned Soldiers League taking over Menzies as a permanent club, and wonder whether Sailors will be eligible too! I suppose so, because it is actually Returned Soldiers & Sailors, isn't it? Be handy if I was working at N.S.T. wouldn't it - dash around there for lunch and a swim at midday.

As I anticipated in my last letter, I finished my Exam. this week and believe fairly confidently that I put in passing papers for each subject. After the Maths. exam was over, I felt very ashamed of myself, because I should have got 100%, but because of some ridiculously stupid mistakes I made, and realized as soon as it was all over, I'll probably score nearer to 70% - still a Pass of course, but it makes me feel very wild. Now all that remains is to wait patiently until the results come out, and after that, I hope, just wait for my turn to be promoted! From now on, I think that anytime you're in town, you might pop up to the "Regalia section" in David Jones George St. store, and see whether the two gold Petty Officer's badges, and the two gold Good Conduct Chevrons I ordered have been completed yet. If you get them, take the money from that 30/- of mine you are holding, or if you've banked that for me, from an allotment. I reckon I'll look quite a sight for the Pine St. sticky-beaks when I wear them and the gold buttons, eh?

Among my mail this week, I had another Airgraph from Col Ayres who is still in England, and his Airgraph is post marked "Yorkshire". It is dated 9th

Feb. and he's screaming blue murder about the cold - I'd swop him any time, and I'll write and tell him to make the most of it while he's over there. Wonder if I'll ever get back - hope so - lottery win .. roll on?? Also a letter from Merle dated 9th March, and a couple from Bubs to which I've already replied. Also a morsel of wedding cake from a girl who used to work at NST - she probably sent it to make me curious - but I'd already heard she was wed and guessed who it must be.

That's about all for now Mum, so I'll close down with my usual cheerio, love, and a happy birthday.

Your affectionate son,
Jim

Letter No. 7

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
24th March, 1944

Mom Dear,

Very pleased to receive your letter No. 7 containing the clippings about the Bondi Surf Carnival - you certainly gave me a wide selection and I was able to get a very good idea of the proceedings. None of the other Surf Club chaps on-board had the full story as early as I did, and so your cuttings went the rounds. Must have been quite a sea running, and insofar as only the Junior Championship was run, compares to the "Bronte Epic" of years ago, when the Junior event was the only race held. Apparently the boats provided all the thrills and it's a great wonder that none of the crews were seriously hurt. Very nice to know that our lad "Rod" and not "Ron" as you call him, brought off the only swimming event. I suppose Pinto gave himself quite a good show when he saw the big sea that was running and was disappointed when it was called off.

In regard to my cream trousers - I would still like to keep them as they are comfortable for just lounging around, but if you are at all short in the clothing line, and need another skirt, you may go ahead and use them.

You don't seem terribly enthusiastic about the place in Kent St. that Lawrence showed you, but I'll depend on you to do the right thing in that regard. If you have any doubt, however, either leave it alone, or compromise until I can have a dekko at the premises. It wouldn't be very cunning to rush right in and involve a "thou" on a house that wasn't at least 99% satisfactory.

As ever, there is not a lot to write about, but in regard to my "trusty watch", I hope that you have it back from the repairer and it's ticking along okay, as I don't want to bring this newer one with me, if I can use the old'un. The climate up here affects the watch internally, I'm sure, and it's also showing signs of stain and corrosion on the outside. The old watch's outside appearance couldn't

suffer much more, so it would be better to use it and preserve the other for more "dressy" occasions.

I was as cold last night as I've been for months. We had a "cinema performance" on the foc'le, and there was a lovely cool breeze blowing, with just a suspicion of rain in it. The picture shown was Jean Parker in the "Girl from Alaska" and was one continual series of blizzards, ice-floes and plain snow. When I bedded down below decks afterwards, it was the first night that my body hadn't been glistening with sweat. Later in the night, of course, the old atmosphere took over, and I woke up feeling as damp as ever. The weather is once again just abominable, with skies as grey as I ever saw in England, but the rain is considerably harder. It's just the season though, I'm afraid, and we can only wait until the "dry" comes again, so that we can pursue our slumbers on the upper deck again, without the continual threat of a cloud-burst through the night.

I'd like you to read through a very long letter I wrote to Bubs a couple of days ago as it would take too long to reproduce it again in the same detail. Briefly, the contents dealt with the fact that the question of an Officers' Training Course for me has been brought up again, and depending on the marks I get in the Petty Officers' Exam. I will be sent to do the course at Flinders and if I pass, I would then become a Paymaster Sub/Lieutenant.

Now that I am fairly assured that I have passed for P.O. and also, that when promoted, I can probably arrange to stay on the ship, I don't feel so keen about taking the opportunity for a Commission. In Bub's letter, I have tried as fairly as possible to set out the arguments "for" and "against" and think it only right that you should give me your opinion. In my own mind, briefly, the main thing about becoming an officer, is the glamour which civilians attach to the uniform and the fact that a man must be just a "leetle" bit superior to be commissioned. The main reason against, is that it means a loss of a certain amount of freedom, as regards personal conduct, movements, speech and in making friends and acquaintances. However, read the letter, and let me know what you think of the whole business.

As we near the end of the quarter, work has banked up on us, and we're kept pretty well employed, but I get time for a little reading, and battering a tune out of the equally battered pianny. Unfortunately, the state of the weather

has not encouraged me to do some daily physical training, as I know I should, but this climate tends to make one very lazy, and especially just after lunch, sleep is very hard to keep at bay. In spite of this, I'm feeling pretty fit, and my habit of taking two hot washes per day, followed by cold showers, probably has something to do with this, and also the fact that as yet, I am unafflicted by rashes, pimples and similar discomforts that are very prevalent.

I'm very sorry to report the loss of my cushion and it's "white" pillow cover, but I don't miss it very much and a shirt rolled up serves in it's stead quite well. I'm afraid the loss was very much due to my own carelessness, as I forgot to put it in my locker in the morning, and it would be expecting too much to find it still there at night, when I prepared to conquer sleep.

Mail hasn't been treating me very well of late, but I'm not complaining very much, because I find it a strain to write to people in whom I have only very slight interest - this weather!!

That just about closes this edition Mum - Bubs wrote about her application being accepted for the Hospital, and by now I suppose you are both discussing the change-over. Only hope I can get back before it takes place, although I don't want to interfere with Bub's plans so long as they are agreeable to you.

Cheeroh till next time Mum, and give my regards to any enquirers.

Your loving son,
Jim

Letter No. 8 9

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
30th March, 1944

Mom Dear,

Received your letter No. 8 dated 19th March with the "dope" about Kath's wedding. I can bet that Rene and Coral were as excited as the bride and I suppose you'll have your fill of Claytons and Harden news before you're through. Kath seems to have done alright to receive £75 in cheques etc. as wedding present - certainly a big help towards expenses.

In regard to Aunty selling Perce's car, I'm sure she did the right thing, although I think she should have consulted some sensible person, (outside the Curvey family), and then she probably would have been able to get a better cash price. Just the same, I think she's probably relieved to get it off her hands, and now perhaps Bill, if he's not too tired, can pull down that eyesore of a shed. Notice that you definitely turned down the place in Kent Street and guess you know what you are doing. Maybe, if I get inveigled over to Bobbie's next time I'm home, I'll renew acquaintanceship with the Mrs. Reid you mention. She's got a little bit more "nouse" than Bobbie!

Although I hope I'm home for my birthday, you might as well send that "birthday parcel" off, as it's better to be home and the parcel chasing me, than to advise you not to send it, and then be still here and have no little extras at that time. I heard that we were getting some comforts doled out today, and thought there might be something worth while in the eatable line, but there was only soap and tooth-paste on the menu. The soap is always acceptable, but I've enough tooth-pastes, powders etc. to last me till Xmas. Find out who has a preference for Pepsodent and I'll make a present of some.

Right now, I'm in the middle of closing off the books for the end of the quarter, and of course pay day today, makes it a bit heavier. What with the study I did, and this heavy issue of work coming right on top, I feel that my eyes

are really showing the effects and I intend trying to cut out all reading that isn't necessary, and apply once more for transfer to Captain's Office, where I'll have no figures to cope with, and the strain should be less. I also thought it would do no harm to begin once again, as best as I can under present conditions, that course of eye culture. I started on it tonight and did my 20 minutes palming, and some of the other exercises. I'll see if I can cut out drinking with meals too - it won't be such a great sacrifice as the way the tea has been lately, it's an insult to the old tum, and would be better used for varnishing furniture.

Instead of reading tonight as I usually do, I inveigled a lad into a game of crib, which is not trying to the eyes, and managed to get two very fine victories to his very close win. I will have to find diversions that will not bother the optics, and think it would be better to just gossip on the upper deck, than stick below and read. Unfortunately, this cuts out music, as far as playing from the script at anyrate, but I'll probably manage to do that in moderation. Had a very enjoyable session at the piano the other night with a few of the boys singing - played for about two hours altogether, and the perspo was streaming off me, and my shorts were just saturated when I finally desisted.

I didn't forget your birthday, but unfortunately didn't get a chance to send you a wire, but hope my cheque arrived in good time and you were able to buy a nice present. I wrote a letter to Percy the other day just to remind him that he still has a brother, but don't expect to get a reply.

Don't know if I told you that Goody has started working at Eastern Cable and Wireless in Spring Street, mainly to fill in time I think, until her course as an X-Ray technician comes up in July, although she did mention that she might continue working and do the course at night. She'd find plenty on her hands if she decides to do that.

Had a bit of bad luck last night when somebody else claimed my stretcher, probably thought they had a better right to it than me. That means that I have to sleep on the deck again now, because a hammock is out of the question, being too stuffy and hot. I don't mind sleeping on the deck so much as the fact that with a stretcher I could sleep up top, even if the deck was wet, providing it wasn't actually raining. Now however, unless the deck is dry, I have to "crash" below. Not so good!! The only bright point is that it makes me appreciate my little bed at home a whole lot more.

We were lucky enough to see one of Bob Hope's pictures onboard the other night - "My Favourite Blonde" with Madeleine Carroll. As with all of his shows it was good for a laugh, and if you saw the picture yourself, you might remember the amusement it caused when Bing Crosby appeared casually in the picture for about a minute - just as a joke on his pal Bob.

That seems to be the lot for now Mum, except to assure you that the weather is still putrid, and I feel like Col Ayres in England - it will be a treat to see a decent period of sunshine for a change. Till next time, cheerio and regards to the folks.

Your loving son,
Jim

P.S. I may have got numbers of letters mixed – not sure if "7" or "8" was last.

Letter No. 10

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
9th March, 1944

Mom Dear,

Mail has been pretty inconsistent lately, and so I was very pleased to get your No. 9 dated 23rd March. It is quite easy to see how topsy-turvy our mail deliveries have been when I tell you that the parcel you sent arrived yesterday, and your Air Mail letter didn't get here today - therefore, they both took the same time.

Firstly thanks a lot for that parcel Mater and I'm glad to say that it arrived quite intact. The tin of jam had shown just the very slightest signs of leaking, but nothing serious - other chaps onboard get jams in tins like this and their's always seem to get through intact. Once again I was pleased to see the tin of Horlicks and lost no time in opening it. The dried fruit was more than welcome too - I haven't tackled the jar or the packet of sultanas etc. I brought with me last time as unfortunately they were both badly "wog-ridden" and my tummy wasn't strong enough to simply wash them and brush of the mag's as Bubs suggested. You certainly padded the parcel well with papers and I now have a great stack of unread magazines and papers, as your Sunday papers have been coming through alright, and I also received two batches of Smith's and English papers from the Marrises. You'll be pleased to learn that I wrote a "nice" letter to them last night.

That letter in which I sent the cheque for your birthday certainly made excellent time, and should give you time to buy something before your actual birthday arrived. You don't say how Ross likes his new job but I believe it is quite a nice place now. Only wish I could get the chance to drop in on him as it would be quite a welcome break and much more "civilized" than places we spend our time at.

As you've probably heard over the radio and no doubt from the papers

by now, the old ship was involved in the Admiralty Islands operations, and I hope you didn't get worried when you heard about it. I can assure you that I am still quite sound in wind and limb. By the way that episode occurred just immediately before I sat for my exam so you can readily understand that conditions were not exactly perfect for serious, "quiet" study.

Our part in the business was a couple of bombardments, together with other ships, of a couple of islands in the Admiralty group. As you heard, we led the other in and started the fireworks. According to all accounts we did a decent job and thus lightened the task of the soldiers ashore.[6] Their job is tough enough at any time and I certainly don't regret changing from the Army to the Navy, knowing as I do now the sort of conditions they have to endure.

As I mentioned before, the end of the quarter always brings its pile of work for me and I'm still in the midst of it, but am definitely promised, that as soon as it is cleared up I can once again return to Captain's Office as I desire - the officer I mentioned as having appendix operation has now returned to the ship - no doubt after a delightful time ashore!

Our entertainment of late has been limited to cinema shows, but we had an excellent picture last week - "Random Harvest" with Greer Garson and Ronald Coleman carrying away the acting honours. I was very impressed by this picture and so were the lads apparently as they were extraordinarily quiet during the screening as against their usual style of barracking the actors. We have just received a new consignment of books for the ship's library bought from ship's funds and they include many of the best-sellers and much discussed books for the past couple of years. I'm dying to get my hands on a couple of them and Bub's will probably be very envious when I tell her some ot the books we now have on tap. Some of them are very "deep" and a lot quite expensive and perhaps I feel there is something in the remark I heard one chap make, rather contemptuously of the literary leaning of the average matelot, that it was like feeding diamonds to pigs. I do hope they take proper care of them as they are so

[6]To isolate the huge Japanese naval base at Rabaul, the U.S. led Allied forces staged a major invasion of Los Negros Island in the Admiralties (Manus Islands) in February-March 1944. By using a small, isolated beach where the Japanese had not anticipated an assault, the force achieved tactical surprise, but the islands proved to be far from unoccupied. A furious battle over the islands ensued, but in the end, air superiority and command of the sea allowed the Allies to reinforce their position and secure the islands.

good.

My two pairs of old sandals get quite a lot of wear up here, and taking into consideration the water on the decks, and the sweat and also the air's humidity they are going to pieces fairly rapidly, so I hope Mrs. Kelland has been able to get the pair of sandals she promised me!

To-day being Easter Sunday brings to mind the fact that this time last year I was wandering through the beautifully flowering Kew Gardens in London with a nice little English lassie, and certainly a contrast to present surroundings and climate. In spite of being a "Holy Day" I took the advantage of a nice day to do some heavy "dhobying" and after washing my sheet and the trusty old rug as well as the usual shorts etc. you can believe that I was ready to quit. The nice breeze and sun dried everything very well and my "bed" tonight should smell a little more fragrant than of late. I have been fearing that the rug might get up and walk away it was so stiff with dirt and sweat. I'll bring the sheet home for a good boiling when "I get the chance" and I can imagine what you'll say to my idea of a white sheet, but up here conditions aren't exactly ideal for laundering and so long as it smells okay, that's the final test for me.

A couple of letters arrived from Goody today so I'd best write her a reply as soon as I finish this because I must conserve my correspondents now - mail being very scanty. That's about the lot for now Mum, except don't forget to let me know how the expected additions to the Jackson family are progressing. One of the boys onboard had news that he was father of twins - first twins since I've been on the ship, so he'll have some celebrating when we get a chance. Believe me, he's as proud as punch and apparently it was totally unexpected - not like our big Bill!!

Cheerio for now Mums and regards to all the folkses.

Your loving son,
Jim

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
13th April, 1944

Mom Dear,

This is in reply to your No. 10 dated 26th March and it arrived in company with letters from Bubs and Merle and papers from your good self and Merle. I'll write to Merle in due course, but tell her in the meantime that it is no advantage to parcel up newspapers and she is just wasting stamps by doing so.

I was sorry to see that Laurie Ellis is missing and you will remember that I mentioned in a previous letter seeing a piece in the Parish paper about his promotion and decoration. As a matter of fact, his name was in the Casualty List of one of the papers you sent.

I was rather surprised to learn that Goody had actually rung you up to get news of me, but as matter of fact, I didn't write to her for about the first 5 weeks of this trip. As you say, she's a nice kid, but I can hardly bear the thought of the sleep wasted in getting from her place to home when I'm on leave, so my arteries must be hardening or something!

Referring to Perce's farm, I was wondering how a few days up there would suit me when I next get some leave. Don't mention it in advance though, I can bring up the subject if the occasion occurs.

I notice a pencil-written "slogan" about "willing" people on the letter – is that a crack at anyone?

I suppose that Bubs is rushing round like fury in last minute preparation for her hospital training these days, but just in case she questions you on a suitable birthday present for me, just remind her of a book I wrote to her about whilst I was in England – Aldous Huxley's "The Art of Seeing" – I think that is the name! Tell her to get it and hang onto it for me as I'd like to have it to

keep.

Just by the way, I've been thinking very seriously about this recommend for a Commission and have decided that when the time comes, I'll take the opportunity this time. It should lead to a lot of new experiences and will jerk me out of any rut I've been sliding into. As regards my eyes – I'll meet that test when the time comes!

We had an excellent film showing onboard last night – "Tales of Manhattan" with film stars galore in it. Quite possibly you've either seen it or heard of it, so you no doubt know the story.

I've just finished Axel Munthe's "Story of San Michele" and would recommend it to anyone as a most unusual book by a remarkable man.

Cheerio for the time being Mum and regards to the folks.

As always, your loving son,
Jim.

Tales of Manhattan: "A formal tailcoat that gets passed from one owner to another affects each life in a significant way"

Letter No. 12

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
27th April, 1944

Mom Dear,

Haven't sighted any mail for weeks and weeks, so nothing to require an answer. The last mail matter of any kind that I had was a couple of weeks ago in the shape of a parcel from Mr. and Mrs. Marris for my birthday. As the parcel was a large one and contained food, you can imagine that I was well pleased apart altogether from the fact that I felt very flattered at being remembered by them and will be most surprised if I receive a present anything near as pleasing from some of our kin. I will write later on to give them my thanks.

The censor has kindly permitted us to disclose a fact that you have probably already guessed, that is of course that we took part in a bombardment recently. I sincerely trust that you had no anxiety regarding my well-being because as ever I am as fit as I can be, with due regard to a certain loss of sleep and nil physical exercise. Apart from these two facts and a slight falling off in meals I have been having quite a pleasant and interesting time – more than that of course I can't tell you![7]

Up to date I haven't received any results of my exam. and I suppose you have been wondering what the verdict was. Maybe I'll learn my fate when we receive the next mail, and even though I feel more or less confident in a favourable result, I would still like to be certain, then it would be merely a matter of time waiting for my name to slide to the top of the roster for promotion to P.O.

[7]Jim is referring to the initial assault on the Japanese-occupied port of Hollandia by Allied forces, from 22nd April. Japan was planning to use the port as a base for their expansion towards the Australian territories of Papua and New Guinea. Following preliminary air operations and naval bombardment, landings were undertaken in two locations, resulting in a withdrawal by the Japanese to the west of New Guinea and the abandonment of all positions in the east of the island.

The other matter, that I wrote at such length to Bubs about, has been deferred until I have completed my time at the sea and I am then going through with course providing nothing mars my recommendation in the meantime. That will suit me nicely and I'm sure you'll be glad to know my decision.

This letter is almost a waste of paper, except that it allows you to know that I'm still okay and strange as it may seem quite happy in spite of the number of times I think a little wistfully of 8 hours in a feather bed, dances in a cooler climate, an occasional glass with the club boys at the "Robin", home-cooked meals and plenty of milk and fruit. However, the longer I am away, the more I shall relish these lost joys when I return.

That's all this time Mum, cheerio for now Dear and above all, don't worry.

Your loving son,
Jim.

P.S. I'll address this to Bubs as I suppose you will have moved there by the time it arrives.

HMAS Shropshire and ships of Taskforce 74 maneuvering at sea during an air attack, May 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 106664)

Members of a 4-inch gun crew at gunnery drill, Apr. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 016987)

Letter No. 13

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
4th May, 1944

Mom Dear,

Received your letters Nos 11 and 12, the first for some time and will comment on them as necessary. In No. 11 you discoursed at great length on Percy's farm at Kurrajong and if I can be guaranteed a car drive each way I will have a look at the property. Had to laugh at the thought of young Allen being the only one to have any success with a rifle.

Notice in the Parish paper you enclose, that I am mentioned as acknowledging church's parcel – maybe I did, but I'm blessed if I can remember doing so.

Surprised to notice in your letter that Mrs Marris' niece Arline whom I met in England is "turning" for her marriage and I know Mrs Cubbin didn't feel very happy about her own sister who also changed when she married. While on the subject, young Peter onboard here was to be married at St. Mary's Cath. next time we hit Sydney but believe it's postponed. I very much doubt if it will ever come off.

I can imagine what a diversion the mention of "Yeomans" must have been at Stretton Hall, but if Mrs. C is still interested in me as you say, I fear she's doomed to disappointment if she has me in view still as a prospective "in-law". Young Gwenn and I have come miles apart since that car trip to Narooma way back in January 1940, although I have pleasant memories of it.

I suppose this shift out to Bubs's place has been made now and as soon as I know definitely I'll have to change your address as my next-of-kin. Also, do you want to have the allotment altered to Strathfield Post Office to be more convenient for you or have you already made arrangements? I understand that the necessary action is to be taken by you to inform Navy Office. I'd love to

know how Bubs is getting along in her "new" job – it will certainly jerk her out of that "rut" she talks about.

I had a letter from "Goody" at the same time as your two and she mentions having a cosy little phone confab with you. By the way, was it you that sabotaged me – if not somebody has seen or heard too much!! Goody has a P.S. on her letter – "I've been hearing things about you - how many girls HAVE you got anyway?" Sounds bad, doesn't it?

As you probably know ere this, the bombardment I mentioned in my last letter, was carried out by us in the Hollandia area. If you don't already know where it is, Tom or Percy can put you wise. This is not giving away anything hush-hush as the Censor (bless him) has given us full permission to mention this. It's a good job we're allowed to let out something now and again or else our letters would be pretty boring repetitions of previous screeds.

With May now showing on the calendars, I'm beginning to feel an old man. Looking back at events like winning the Club Junior Ch'ship etc it hardly seems possible that it was over 7 years ago. This year it looks as if I shall celebrate (if that is the word) my birthday at sea. However, as Bubs is the next one in the family for a birthday, we may be able to hold a combined party and that would be good fun. It's about time I had another party!

Speaking of the passage of time – Col Curtis and I were only recalling last night that just exactly 12 months previously we had been the guests of our Scots friends in Fifeshire and on that particular day had an outing to the good old town of Perth in Perthshire. Col has a very soft spot for the Scotch.

By the way, I am once again back in Captain's Office – this time, I hope, will be more permanent than the last brief period. I have plenty to do, but that doesn't bother me.

There are two things I've meant to refer to in earlier letters, the first being about my old watch and whether you've had it repaired. While you're at it, buy me another watch band like the last one, as my profuse sweat has made it rot through.

Secondly, have you had any luck regarding the gold badges ordered at David Jones – they should be ready by now, but if you can get them, please don't take

the risk of sending them to me as they're too valuable and hard to get.

Cheerio for now, and give my best to Lofty and the kiddies

Your loving son,
Jim.

HMAS Shropshire crew playing a game of tombola on the deck, March 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 306802)

At a port of call on their way to the rendezvous for the attack on Japanese held Hollandia, Shropshire sailors get together with digger comrades, Apr. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 016991)

Letter No. 13

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
9th May, 1944

Mom Dear,

As you can see by the date, today is "IT". So far it has passed unnoticed by anyone except myself, and I shouted a few of the chaps to "gophers" (soft drinks) but didn't mention that it was any celebration. It always seems too embarrassing to come out baldly and say "It's my birthday" and have them wondering what they're supposed to do about it!

At anyrate, thanks to parcels from you, and also earlier, the Marris', I can have a few little extras to the every-day fare. You might also be interested to learn that I received a parcel on Sunday containing five bars of butterscotch and toffee, with the compliments of W. Bain - even though you had warned me about it in a previous letter I was pleasantly surprised to see it, and the toffee is far more acceptable than chocolates up here. Your parcel was of course very handy, and I'm certainly glad that I made the suggestion about making "Anzacs" for me. It must be years since I had them last, and I think these are the best you've ever made, and I would have been quite satisfied if the whole parcel, had been Anzacs. Of course I have to ration them for myself, because my inclination is to just sit down and empty the tin at one sitting; they are one item that so far I haven't shared with anyone else as they are too precious, and I'd much rather them than cakes.

Yesterday was the best day I've spent since leaving home, as in the afternoon we had the first swimming party from the ship, and luckily enough I wasn't officially duty, and my boss gave me the okay to go. We went off in one of the ship's boats and it nosed onto the shore as there was no jetty. The first couple of chaps that jumped off found themselves up to their waist in water, and we were fully dressed in shoes, socks, shorts and shirt, so the rest of us profited by their error, and stripped off before leaping out with our possessions held above our heads. As usual the water was quite warm, and I had a very enjoyable swim,

but I was careful not to put my feet on the bottom until I was sure there was no sharp rock, coral or other snag to damage them.

After the first swim, I went with a couple of the lads for a wander round and a short sprint in the places where the sand was clean. One of our boys showed remarkable agility at climbing coconut palms after a couple had tried unsuccessfully and had slid down with raw tummies, arms and legs as a result of their effort. The lad I refer to, put an ordinary waist belt loosely round his ankles, and went up one of the tallest trees in the vicinity in a way that would put any native to shame. He quite calmly tossed down enough coconuts for everybody and the others were very grateful for the coconut milk as it was very hot and we were very dry. I had another swim before the boat came to fetch us back to the ship, and saved on the towel by letting the sun dry me, and had a fresh water wash on return to the ship. Altogether, the short break from the ship was muchly needed and the extra amount of sun, and the unusual exercise made me very grateful to lay down on my rug last night.

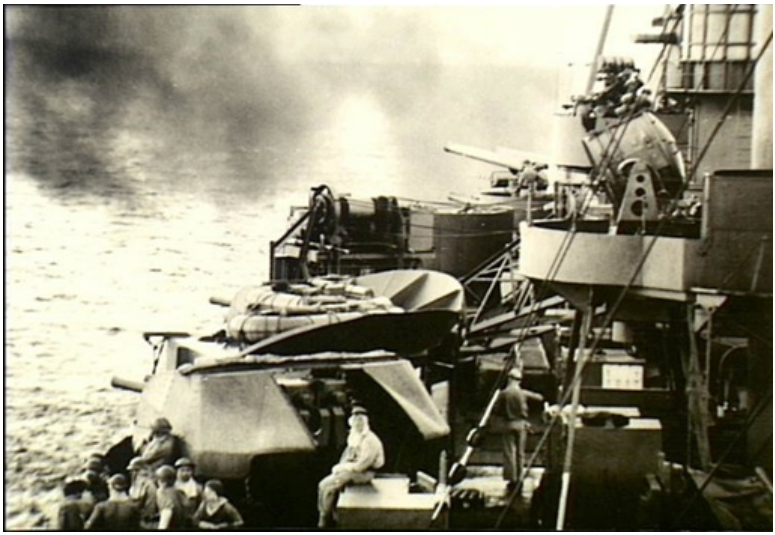
I mentioned in my last letter to Bubs that I attended Communion onboard on Sunday morning, and that was the second Sunday in succession. Of course, we go to a general Service every Sunday subject to certain conditions of course, but I don't particularly enjoy them, and the small volunteer service for Communion has an altogether different atmosphere and I always feel mentally relaxed after it. As you have no doubt shifted to Bub's place by now, I suppose you have already selected a nearby church for your patronage and I'll trot along with you when I get home. Since I have received no word from you subsequent to your move out there, I don't know what provisions have been made as regards to myself; such as, whether there is room for me out there, and whether I am intended to stay there when I come home, and if so, whether any of my clothes have been taken out. However, it doesn't matter very much and is a matter that can be fixed up WHEN I do get back.

Last Monday, I got my desired transfer to Captain's Office again, and although I've been kept pretty hard at it, I feel much happier than I did in Ship's Office, and I'm getting the experience and knowledge that will be essential if and when my advancements come through. So far there is still no official word about the results of my Petty Officer's exam. and it's a bit of a nuisance having to wait so long to be out of suspense. Mail is pretty casual lately, so I suppose that results are on their way and I shall know fairly soon.

There doesn't seem much else to add, except that I just remembered noticing that Jacky Chalk had got another shift and even worse than the last - not having a very good trot is he? Also heard over the radio that his old ship was back in home waters, so if he'd stayed with it, he would have had a long wait wouldn't he?

Till next time Mum,[8] cheerio and regards to the Owers'.[9]

Your loving son,
Jim.



HMAS Shropshire bombarding Sawar Airstrip, May 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 106689)

[8]During May, Shropshire was involved in bombardment of Sawar Airfield, Dutch New Guinea and in supporting US landings at Biak Island, although we have no further letters from Jim in May. After this action, Shropshire was withdrawn from duties in northern New Guinea waters, and returned to Sydney for repairs, which meant Jim could spend some time at home with Ada (and restart a new sequence of Letters in July)

[9]Jim's sister Bub and Lofty Owers

Letter No. 1

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
3 July, 1944

Mom Dear,

Once again I'm back travelling in "ironware" for the Govt. and finding it a little difficult to settle down again. However, by the time this week is out I suppose I'd find it hard to believe I've been away from this ship at all. Of course, as I expected, sleep is the trouble! If anyone had woken me at 7.30 a week ago, I would have felt badly done by – but now I'm congratulating myself that my share of watch-keeping through the next "dark-hours" period is the morning watch which begins at 4am and means I'll have almost 7 lonely hours of uninterrupted sleep (I hope!)

The first night was tough – sleeping on the steel deck after soft beds was hard to take and I felt full of aches after it.

As I expected there is a great pile of work and I'm wading laboriously through it and hope to have my nose above the surface in about 3 months.

I have received news of my P.O.'s exam from two unofficial sources but it looks as if I made the grade and provided I'm still recommended for advancement, it is now simply a question of waiting till my seniority takes me to the top of the roster.

Col Curtis gave me the first news – he said that a Navy friend of his who knows me, remarked that I did well in the exam. One of the P.O.'s onboard said he spoke to the P.O. Writer who used to be onboard and he said that I had got top marks for all the candidates who sat for the exam. Whether that is right I couldn't say for sure, but it certainly looks as if I won't have to sit again thank goodness and if I <u>did</u> get the good marks my informants mention, it looks as if I stand a good show of being sent to Flinders for that course.

Not much else worthy of mention now except that I received a small parcel from the Assoc. of Accountants and so one way or another, my private larder looks quite healthy, which is just as well because Navy fare seems meagre after the home-cooked variety.

My chin is healing up okay but will probably leave a scar just merging with the old one and thus making an additional hazard to my shaving. Can't make up my mind yet about a beard – think I'm a bit fair to make a success of it, but I'd love to grow a "set" and scare everyone with it when home next time.

Up till now I've been taking the Keplers that I had, but think I'd best throw away the remainder as I think its effects would no longer be beneficial.

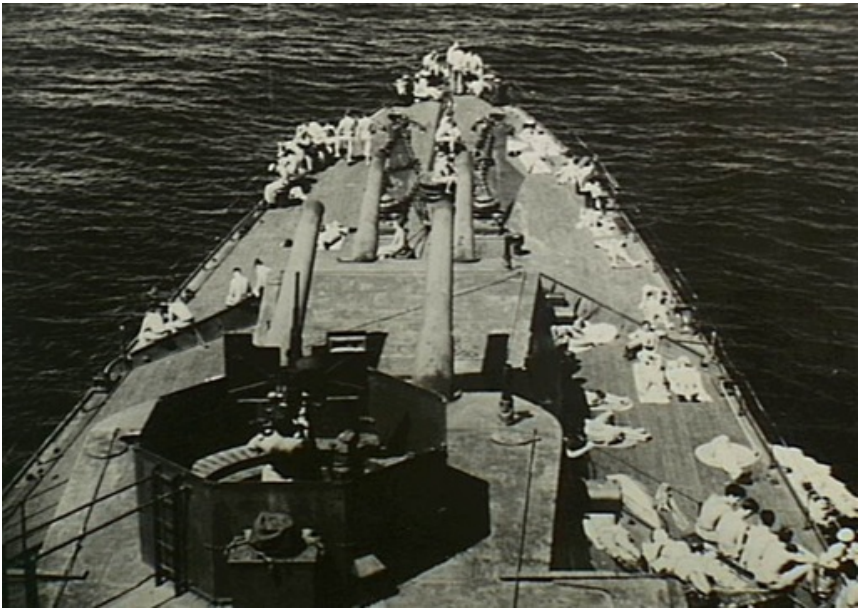
Peter is no longer on the ship and quite a number of other old friends have gone too, and we "old originals" who are left are being gradually whittled down and we begin to feel like "foundation members" as we see the increasing number of strange faces onboard.

That's about all for now Mum – I'm feeling quite alright and taken all round, quite happy about being out on the deep again.

Love to all at home,

Your affectionate son,
Jim.

Captain J. A. Collins CB, addresses his crew on the deck after the cruiser had taken part in the shelling of Hollandia at the time of the Allied landings, May 1944 (Australian War Memorial, 017112)



The HMAS Shropshire looking forward with men relaxing on deck during its operation in northern waters, May 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017151)

Letter No. 2

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
9th July, 1944

Mom Dear,

Once again, I'm back in the old groove and home and Mother seems to be just an expression - it's very hard to realize that it's only about 10 days since I last saw you, so completely "at home" am I in the old ship again. Since last writing, I've put in some good work on the mountainous pile I had then, and it has been reduced considerably, and I might now say that I can almost see over the top of it. All going well, I might manage to duck off for a swim tomorrow and that will be a very pleasant break. So far I haven't had either the time or the inclination to bask in the sun, but this time I don't intend to seek a super sun tan and think that I'll be all the healthier for keeping in the shade until the sun begins to lose it's kick and gives only goodness at about 5 p.m. By the way, one of the lads just wandered in this minute with a letter from Bubs - written on 12th May - at first I thought it was very smart work on the part of both Bubs and the postal people!

Had my hair pruned a little yesterday to air condition me a bit, but haven't gone to the extent that so many of the chaps have of having the lot off - such a horrible assortment of heads I've never seen. Altogether, the lads look a villainous lot just now, with so many shaven pates and a goodly quantity with embryo beards. I've altogether given up all idea of growing a beard because the duration of the beard must be 6 months and not 3 as we thought was the time limit the Commander had put on it. My boss the Captain's Secretary is endeavouring to grow one and the other Writer in here is also seriously considering it, so if he does, I'll be the only respectable looking person in this office. Alan Pickup, the lad who went to the Mountains with me went up to get permission to grow one again, but on learning about the 6 months, he also abandoned the idea. My chin has healed up okay, just leaving a bit of flesh bumped up as a scar, thus elongating the other old one.

Just before settling down to write this letter, I had about an hour on the piano which has now been set on the upper deck, under cover of course, and thus it doesn't make one quite so hot to play for a while. Last time we were home it was tuned, and not before time, and so it is a little more pleasure to play it now. I might as well keep my fingers in practice although I'm afraid I'll never be much better player than I am now, but at least people know what I'm playing and I get a certain amount of enjoyment out of it, so I suppose that counts most.

With much careful conservation, I am making my "Anzacs" spin out, and when they are finished, I have three packets of biscuits - Arrowroot and shredded wheatmeal which I managed to buy at the Canteen before their supplies ran out. Thanks to the large supply I brought back on the last two days I have plenty of Jam, and so far have only finished the very small bottle of fig and about a third way into the grape. I also still have a few lemons left, but don't suppose they will see the week out and as they seem to be keeping so well, I rather wish I had brought more with me. Still under the circumstances I think I did pretty well as regards supplies.

You'll remember that I couldn't find my hammock when I came off on leave, but I came across it today, or rather one of my friends did, so I don't have to worry any more about having to buy new hammocks, mattress and blanket. The darned thing was a long way from the place I last put it, but apart from being rather dirty, the hammock and contents were intact, so I must be thankful for small mercies.

As yet there hasn't been any mail for me, recent mail that is, so I'm waiting to know the latest about Lofty's move to Orange and also what your plans are. It was really too bad that Lofty's appointment should come when it did, because I think you were just settling down nicely at Bubs', weren't you. Whatever happens, I do hope that you won't let Merle get on your nerves too much, and only hope for your sake that she buzzes off somewhere, because I'm sure that you would prefer being at 61 on your own, knowing too that you were keeping my home going too.

I suppose you've put that extra "tenner" I gave you in the bank, and next time you go up, get the interest put in that personal bank book of mine, and let me know how much the robbers assess it as. That's about the brightest point of

my being away like this - the results as shown by my bank book, and I suppose it will come in very handy in the future, and I can now really say that I've got a bit of capital behind me, and in most probability am as well off as I would be had there been no war. Just the same, I'm getting a bit sick of this old war now, almost 5 years is a long time, but news seems to be pretty bright on all fronts and I don't think it will be long before I'm on my last year of Naval service. After that, it's a little hard to say, but I'm inclined to have a go with Percy all going well; otherwise, there is always New Systems, not to mention Pinto's idea which to my mind is not half as crazy as it sounds. Anyhow, we'll see!

Without a letter to reply to, it's pretty difficult to put a screed together, so I'll call it quits now till next time. Love to all at home ....

Your loving son,
Jim.

Letter No. 3

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
16th July, 1944

Mom Dear,

Rain is something we've had lots of this afternoon, and as it was not expected by yours truly, I did a conscientious "dhoby" job after lunch in which I included my sheet for good measure. I soon realized my error as soon as I emerged on deck to hang my efforts up, as I could see the storm sweeping towards us. Of course, there was nothing else to do but turn tail and take my precious washing below to make the best arrangements I could. The intensity of the rain can be judged by the "pipe" that came over the 'speakers shortly afterwards - "Men may now bathe their bodies on the foc'le" or something to that effect anyway, and up go the lads with their soap to take advantage of the unrationed fresh water "shower". You'll be glad to know that I was successful in getting my washed clothes dry, and so will be able to slumber either on or between my favourite sheet tonight.[10]

Speaking about rain - a few nights back, we were sitting up on the foc'le viewing the pictures - the show was called "Timber" - a pretty old one I should think, when down came the rain. No warning of course, and we were jampacked up there and had no course but to sit and take it. Just as a matter of interest, for once, the rain was icy cold and of course we were clad solely in shorts, nary a shirt even, and you should have heard the groans about the cold water coming from men who a couple of hours before were cursing the heat. Some people are hard to satisfy - or are they?

I suppose it will come as a terrible shock to you Mama, but your son has

[10] As interesting as Jim's ordeal washing his clothes is, the real action was happening on the 13th-14th July as Task Force 74, including HMA Ships Shopshire, Australia, Arunta and Warramunga were ordered to furnish gun support to American troops at Aitape, New Guinea. The ground force later confirmed the effectiveness of the support, which caused a Japanese force of more than 500 to reture, leaving many dead.

been a very bad boy and has been up before the beak, sentenced and now has a criminal record on his conduct sheet. My "crime" was rather awful - to wit, I was observed to be wearing blue short trousers in Captain's Office at 2100 (9 p.m. to you) on last Monday night, thus contravening the orders of this good ship regarding wearing apparel, and was accordingly called on to appear on the Quarter Deck before the Officer of the Watch immediately and placed among the Commander's defaulters. I appeared before that great man on Wednesday and was sentenced to 7 days stoppage of leave. Fortunately for my peace of mind, there has been no opportunity since then of leaving the ship for anyone, so that part didn't hurt very much, and the only other part of the punishment that affects me is having to fall in each night with the other hardened "criminals" - known in the Navy as "fowls" or "chooks"! Actually this is my first disciplinary failing in 3½ years - the only other offence being when Col Curtis and I arrived back from leave half an hour late when we were in England. However, I am a reformed character now and will very virtuously "go straight" from now on, sticking to the khaki shorts as prescribed and only wearing blue shorts for P.T. when they are allowable!

Today being Sunday, I went to "church" twice in penance for my sins - firstly to general church and then to Communion. As I think I've already told you, we have a new Chaplain onboard, and today was my first experience of him professionally. I was rather surprised to learn that he is actually a Methodist but he conducts all the Protestant Services. I used to think that the Methodists didn't have Communion, but it appears that they do. This Chaplain seems to be very zealous about performing his duties, as he conducts evening prayers every night in his cabin, but so far I haven't got around to attending.

In the course of his talk this morning, the Chaplain remarked that he heard one of the chaps say the other day that the only things to do up here are to Smoke, Sweat and Swear - I think he has something there! For my own part, I certainly do plenty of item No. 2 at anyrate.

During the week, "Slops", or for your benefit "The Clothing Store" was open for the first time in quite some time, and the sailors rushed it just like bargain hunting house-wives. The queue leading into the bowels of the ship was very long, thus ensuring a long wait for all the potential customers, many of whom were not able to get served even after waiting their turn for about 1½ hours. Those who were successful came to light with their arms full of clothing

etc. and liberally covered with a heavy coating of salt water i.e. sweat! I managed to get what I wanted - another white towel, a good cap cover, and a pair of khaki shorts that are a little too big for me owing to taking 34" waist as 32" was out of stock when I got there. If they don't shrink to the right size by the time I get home, that will be another job for you, to take them in at the waist a couple of inches.

By the way, I don't think I mentioned that I went off last Monday afternoon, as I said I hoped to do in my last letter, and had a very enjoyable swim. Even though I kept as much as possible in the shade during the couple of hours ashore, I got burnt a little, but quickly sweated the burn out and had no after effects. We were to have a boxing tournaments with the soldiers ashore, but other things came up, and the boxing didn't transpire, and our lads (not me, by the way) who were training assiduously for the event had all their preparations for nothing.

As regards food, I'm pleased to report that the jam I brought on in such large quantities is a great stand-by, as sometimes our offerings would leave even Don asking for more. The Anzacs have been consumed, but I still have a couple of lemons and the malted milk left. If you are considering sending me another parcel, I'd appreciate it if you were to put in 6 or a dozen packets of "Lifesavers". About the best, and only, places I know where they can be bought are the shops at the Regent and Plaza Theatres where they'll let you have a couple of packets at a time. When sending them, put them in an air-tight tin so that they'll keep okay till they arrive. I'm rather partial to peppermints and/or chewing gum and both are unprocurable onboard. I could buy chocolate but haven't the slightest inclination for it. They are trying to make us "salt conscious" onboard, apparently believing that it will improve our health, and the Senior Doctor gave us a talk about it the other day over the loud speakers, and we can now grab a couple of salt tablets as we get our meals. Knowing my dislike for salt, you'll hardly be surprised to learn that my first venture in salt-taking was almost disastrous. I took two tablets washed down with water at lunchtime and then at supper another one washed down with a cup of tea. Shortly after supper I felt lousy, and looked a cert to be laying over the side. At the same time the saliva was welling up in my mouth so quickly that I could barely manage to swallow it all. After a couple of gentlemanly belches I manage to get back to almost normal, but believe me, it was a near thing! One tablet a day, dissolved on my tongue will be sufficient for me for a while, at anyrate until my tummy gets used to the

stuff.

As I always seem to report, work is quite brisk enough to pass the day quickly for me, which is just as well in a way, but I'm sure glad that I'm not still in Ship's Office, where they are now in the throes of battling with the closing of the quarterly ledgers. I had quite enough of that for a while, and prefer to remain where I am until I have learnt most of the tricks in this branch of the work. As yet there have been no further developments as a result of my exam, as the official announcement about the marks has not yet arrived, but no doubt there is mail waiting for us somewhere, and I might sight a couple of personal ones for myself when we catch up with it. Until I get letters to answer, I shan't write to anyone but you, so tell Bubs not to be distressed if she misses out. You might tell her that she can sue the old bloke who told her that the identification disc chain wouldn't tarnish - perhaps it wouldn't under normal circumstances, but up here conditions are definitely abnormal and the poor chain just couldn't take it, and all the pretty silver coating has completely disappeared. Tell her however, that it still does the job just as effectively and that is the main thing after all.

By the way, I don't think I mentioned it previously, but it might be a good idea to get my watch cleaned and overhauled whilst I'm away. It definitely needs cleaning up, and after the period up here, perhaps the innards could do with a spot of oil too! I still get plenty of time to think while I'm up here Mum, and naturally much of my thinking concerns "apres le guerre"! Joining the R.S.L. was to my way of thinking a sort of insurance, and in that regard as well as for other reasons, I have had the Masons Lodge in mind. I think that you would like to see me take it up, especially after the way Dad was so keen about it, and although I don't know just what the traditions are etc. or what you've done with Dad's regalia, I think you'd approve of me having it if possible. It's not a thing I've given a lot of thought to previously, and so I don't even know where or how to begin, but feel sure I can leave a seasoned campaigner like you to work out the first steps. Firstly, which Lodge would I join? I understand that it is necessary to have a proposer and a seconder, and about the only Masons I know offhand are Lofty, Tom and Pinto. I think I heard you say that Pinto is in the one at Bondi, and that being just opposite the Park would be fairly handy, and it would be an advantage to have a mate with me when I start off. Next time you see Bill or speak to him on the phone, you might mention that to him, and ask what he suggests. If he is in the one at Bondi, you'll probably

find that there are a couple of the Club chaps there too, so I shan't want for sponsors if that is the case. However, I'll leave it in your hands Mum - tell me what you think and what you find out if you approve, and also have a yarn with Lofty and/or Tom about it if you think advantageous. By the by - is Perce Y. a Mason?

As I've had no letters, I can only keep on addressing my envelopes to Willee St. and hope you receive them okay, although I should think by now, the Owers family are nearing the day of departure to Orange. Give them all my salaams, and give Bubs my gossip if she howls about not getting mail from me.

Cheerio for now Mother darling,

Your loving son,
Jim.

Letter No. 4

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
23rd July, 1944

Mom Dear,

It is becoming progressively harder to write anything like a solid letter these days, as we are now well onto our fourth "mail-less week". I don't know if the Postal Dept. have mis-laid our address, or perhaps just don't remember what we are at all, but at anyrate they should get the correct answers if they applied to old Hirohito whose boys have seen more of us than they'd like. I note from the news that our old friend Tojo has been ousted which is a bad business as we were becoming used to fighting "Tojo" and being conservative find it hard to re-adjust our ideas to calling the enemy by the new Premier's name - whatever that is - at anyrate it's harder to remember than dear Toj.[11]

Returning to the mail situation, I suppose there will be a bushell per man when it finally catches up with us, but what appalls me to think about is the amount of official correspondence that we are going to have dumped on our lap! What a picnic we'll have when that happens - I suppose I'll be so flat out dealing with it that my own private mail will remain unopened until the pressure eases somewhat. Nevertheless, that bother notwithstanding, I wish the mail would hurry along because I want to know what is going on at home. It seems very likely to me that the Owers' family would be just about on their way to Orange now, so I'll address your mail from now on to "61" unless I get a recent letter from you giving me a definite date of departure.

Although it's not yet a month since I was home, it already seems a very long time since I was lolling in bed till all hours of the morning and nibbling

[11] Jim is referring here to Hideki Tojo, the prime minister of Japan from 1941 to 1944. After the war's tide turned decisively against Japan, Tojo resigned on 18 July 1944. Following his nation's surrender to the Allied powers in September 1945, he was arrested, convicted by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East in the Tokyo Trials, sentenced to death and hanged on 23 December 1948.

fruit at all hours of the day and night, and once again the boys are trying to start buzzes as to when we'll be back again. Alan and I have been talking about where we'll go for our next leave, but I should think that by then Bubs will be well established at Orange, and a trip up there would be indicated. You and I have been promising ourselves a jaunt to Orange for a very long time, so I think we'll put that idea into action and you can show me around for a week or so at anyrate. Just make sure that they have a Baths up there though, because I don't think I'll take it on otherwise!

Last Tuesday night finished my time as a "wrong-doer" and I was pleased enough to be off the black-list, as I always felt sure that I'd forget to fall in one night and then be up before the beak once again on another charge. That's the trouble about this racket, there's so many little things that can bring trouble and it's a good man that can avoid all the pit-falls for the unwary.

Fortunately my work is more or less under control now and I've been a pretty regular patron of the physical jerks fanatics' squad on the upper deck between 4.30 and 6 of an evening. Throwing the medicine ball around is a good way of keeping fit and it certainly brings the old sweatperation rolling out. Every now and again somebody's aim or catching is a bit faulty and then away goes another ball over the side. Most of them we manage to get back, usually brought by some passing boat when we are at anchor and then we have to put up with a soggy ball which naturally gets filthy after it has hit the deck a few times and in a little while our bodies are so dirty we look like coal miners. A few boxing fiends pummel each other also, but I've declined invitations to spar because I tell them that I'm up there solely for the benefit of my health and my pugilistic tendencies stop after I've punched the bag for a few minutes. I do quite enough to keep in condition though and right now am feeling very fit.

Unfortunately through the week we had to change the place of abode of our office and are now in a smaller "cubby" which is rather stuffy and very hot as it doesn't possess a porthole. After the sun has gone to town on the ship's steel side for a while you can just imagine the heat-waves it passes on to us. My idea of working now is to start in as soon as I get up in the morning when it is reasonably cool, take time off for a clean up and breakfast and then go through till mid-day and knock off till after supper unless specially required. I find that I can get the work done in this way and that it doesn't prove so exhausting as working solidly and rather dopily through the afternoon. The afternoon is

spent on the upper deck getting what breeze there is, sometimes reading and sometimes taking a little doze.

Taking into consideration the new "oven" I work in and the P.T. I do in the evening, I'm sweating more than I did previously so think it only wise to heed the doctor's advice and take a couple of salt tablets daily. I've got the salt beaten now so that it doesn't any longer make me sick. My trouble was that I used to drink hot tea to wash the salt down and immediately I would feel very squeamish - apparently the idea is to wash it down with cold water and since I've adopted that principle, I've had no further trouble. Maybe when I get home next time I'll confound everyone that knows my fancies by saying - "Pass the salt, please".

There is a certain amount of discussion onboard of late about the coming Referendum. We are to vote I understand, and worse luck, I suppose it will be my office that has to arrange the whole rigamarole. However, as yet nobody seems to know with any certainty what it's all about because I suppose any pamphlets for our information on the subject are in our long awaited mail and naturally we've had no newspapers to give us the good oil. Personally I'd like to know just a little more about it although I don't suppose Canberra is terribly worried about the way I'm going to vote.

Such news as we get onboard now comes to us via radio, sometimes very distorted so that we don't know what the devil has happened and we don't have the recourse to newspapers to check up. The general trend seems to be very favourable though and the end seems to be well on the way. Just at present I'm reading a book that I think Bubs would like "The End of the Beginning" - the third volume of speeches by Churchill. In time I think that it and the previous two volumes of his speeches -("Into Battle" and the "Unrelenting Struggle" are the names of the two others) - will be real history books of the British part of the war and it would be handy to have them. Next time I get a chance I must shop around and see if I can get them all and also the Fourth Volume if it is yet in print. You might mention them to Bubs if she doesn't already know them - by the way tell Bubs I haven't written because I've had nothing to reply to and it's difficult to me to simply write a duplicate of the letter I write to you.

Yesterday we had a sale of kit of a chap who died last time we were away. The proceeds of the sale go to his wife and it's usual for his friends to rally

round and bid high for articles of his kit. A couple of examples from the lot sold yesterday was a rug that brought over £18, a heavy coat £9 and a shaving kit about £6 - it certainly shows how good-hearted these chaps are!

Well Mum, once again I'll bid you good-night and hope that next week I'll at last have some of yours to reply to. Till then, regards to Merle and all at home and look after yourself - go easy on the Canteen work.

Your fond son,
Jim.

Letter No. 5

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
31st July, 1944

Mom Dear,

Didn't get the opportunity to type my usual Sunday night letter last night, but as it happens, I wouldn't have finished it off in any case as it is confidently predicted that we will receive our long awaited mail tomorrow and I will then have (I hope) something to reply to.

I suppose you've heard enough over the air and probably in the papers to know how we've been occupying ourselves since leaving home, but in any case the censor has just signified his permission for us to simply mention that we took part in bombardments in the AITAPE area and no doubt hurt the Japs' feelings if nothing else. Actually they were more or less classed by the boys as [censored] but I suppose none the less useful as regards the purpose that we were given the job for.[12]

Just for your information, the husband of your "cannery friend" Thelma didn't come back with us this time and I believe that whilst he was on leave he and his wife took a trip to Adelaide and both being a trifle under the affluence of inchohol one night, the cops had reason to remonstrate with them and they didn't take the kindly advice very sweetly and finished up in quite a lot of strife.

A lot of native canoes were swarming around the ship today and they seem to have learnt quite a lot about trading, and in the exchanges of souvenirs and

[12] In April 1944, US forces landed at Aitape in northern New Guinea, in conjunction with a landing at the main Japanese air base in Hollandia supported by the Shropshire. The primary task of the ground forces in Aitape was the defence of the small airfield and harbour, in support of a future push north to the Philippines. In July, Japanese forces attacked from their base in Wewak to the east of Aitape, but repeated naval bombardments by Shropshire and other allied ships and planes inflicted heavy casualties, setting the stage for a future Australian offensive to capture Wewak, in November 1944.

fruit etc. I'm pretty sure that the sailors got the worst of the bargaining. Some of the canoes are very big and I counted no less than 33 occupants in one of them and with all of them paddling furiously, but in perfect rhythm to a native chant, they can certainly make a good speed in their light craft. They hung around the ship for a while just staring curiously at us as I must confess we did at them but I don't think they were well up on English as I didn't hear any ship to canoe conversations carried on.

I should be a fully qualified laundryman if I ever need a job badly when I get back to civvie street; last week I had two large wash days on which I dhobied among other gear a hammock, a rug and a blanket - after I'd finished I was utterly exhausted because the heat in the bathrooms is terrific. This afternoon I had quite enough of it too, as I washed a couple of shirts, long trousers, socks and a towel and was very thankful to have that task completed. While actually in the bathroom, the only way to keep at all cool is to keep continually going to the salt water shower and then back to the washing until the heat drives me under the shower again. What an easy wash day you home-folk have!

Just to fill up a little more space, I'll put on record that I'm still feeling fit, keeping up my P.T. whenever pressure of work doesn't prevent it and also still taking my salt tablets. I'm very pleased that my skin is still quite clean because there are lots onboard who have tons of "hickies". I think that a lot of these are due to the desire for a sun tan because the old Sol up here has a lot of kick in it. I'm not worrying about a "tan" this trip - in any case it goes very quickly so I'm devoting my wits rather to keeping in the shade.

Had a very good picture one night last week - Red Skelton in "Whistling in the Dark" - did you see it when it was in Sydney? He is more or less an imitator in style at anyrate, of Bob Hope.

2nd August, 1944.

Well Mother, I expect I'd best finish this screed and get it off, for you see, the long expected and eagerly awaited mail did not materialize yesterday, nor did it put in an appearance today! Perhaps by my regular letter day, next Sunday, I'll have had better luck and here's hoping. As you can well imagine, it's pretty heart-breaking for the boys to go day after day with still no word from home and I can only comfort myself with the fact that I am more fortunate

than them, insofar as your letters are really the only ones that matter and apart from wanting to know where you are living, and the latest about Merle, Cyril, Bubs and Lofty, there is nothing of great import; at times like this it is much easier for one's peace of mind not to have a wife, fiancee or even a regular girl.

Once again the Censor has given us permission to release a tit-bit of information, just nothing more or less than the fact that we took part in the operations at Cape Sansapor. Maybe you've heard and seen more than that from regular news sources, or perhaps you don't even know what the devil I'm talking about, but I'm afraid that's the extent of our licence.[13] Just to reassure you however, I can only repeat what I said earlier in the letter, that I'm fit and well myself and that should nullify your worries.

Yesterday, a party of chaps from the ship went "seining". Seining, in case you don't know is derived from the River Seine in France, where the local fishermen take a couple of boats, suspend a net between them and drag in along a couple of miles and then haul it onto a handy beach and abstract their catch from the net. The lads got quite a good haul yesterday, many fish of quite respectable size but of what category I couldn't say. I never was any good in telling one kind of fish from another - maybe I'm a little better at aircraft recognition. Unfortunately, I didn't partake of any fish myself, because the chaps that caught it were the only ones to get a share, and as the biggest proportion of the "crews" participating were Chiefs, Petty Officers and Officers, the bulk of the fish went to their messes. Perhaps I shall get a chance to take part in a similar expedition at a later date.

We had a very good picture billed for exhibition last night - Monty Woolley in the "Pied Piper". As a matter of fact, only yesterday I was reading the Women's Weekly in which the write up for the "Pied Piper" appeared and the grading was three stars. However, Navy cinemas aren't quite the same as civvie ones, and in spite of the scheduled time for starting being 7.30, owing to some mechanical defect it was 8.20 before we got going. The sound wasn't the best and the screen also was rather flickery and I don't think many were surprised when after two reels it refused to work any more. However we sat hopeful and full of abuse until 9.20, when the operators tried again but there was a dazzling

[13]The landings at Cape Sansapor saw the Allies capture a foothold at the western end of New Guinea, where they were able to build an air base as a stepping stone to reach the Philippines (next stop: Morotai).

flash of light and it was decided that the show was over. We then concluded that it was a serial! However, the show went on again tonight including the first two reels, and as the sound was much improved we were able to gather what it was all about, and it turned out to be an excellent show, and thoroughly enjoyed by the matelots, hardened critics though they be.

That's about the lot for this time Mum, so till next mail day,

Cheerio and love from your fond son,
Jim.

Columns of troop-packed landing craft en route for the invasion of Sansapor., July 1944. (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration)

Mitchells of the 42nd Bomb Group lined up at Cape Sansapor, New Guinea, August 1944. (U.S. Air Force)

Letter No. 6

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
6th August, 1944

Mom Dear,

There are plenty of distractions to-night, but duty calls – "letter night"!! Moreover I have at last received some at least of the long awaited mail! The distractions consist of, in order of temptation – a picture show – but the picture is very, very ancient — namely Grace Moore and Franchot Tone in "The King steps out", so I passed that up — then up for'd one of the lads was playing some "hot music" on the bagpipes and I passed that up fairly easily and lastly the radio had a session of yodelling cowboys and it was not very hard to leave behind. So, I just listened to the latest news and here I am.

Well, as I said previously, the mail arrived. the first batch coming aboard on Thursday and I was the pleased recipient of your letters Nos. 1, 2, and 4. There was also a newsletter from Pearson at NST and two airgraphs from my gal in Durban. Yesterday we got some more mail and this time your No. 3 turned up, with one from Bubs and one from a lass at Bondi, who by the way is hostile with me as she reckons the ship was in harbour about the 11th of last month, but as no-one knows better than you, I was some considerable distance away at the time she mentions. I shall have to tell her kindly but firmly that she made a grave mistake and that there was absolutely no chance of my rushing out to see her as she seems to have expected.

As usual I will skim through your letters and comment on anything that is necessary. In regard to the key you sent me, I'm very sorry I inconvenienced you by taking the key of your treasure box and hope you were able to get a key made to fit it as you mentioned. The one you sent me only belongs to a desk drawer that I very seldom lock, and so I wasn't aware that I had the wrong key. If you want the other one returned, let me know as otherwise I'll hang on to it until such time as I get home. There certainly seem to be a lot of people demanding your services but I hope that by now you have learned the technique of telling

them to look after themselves for a change. I notice that Wal has at last got his wish and has got himself connected with the "Services", but I think that once he gets over the novelty he won't find it all fun and games especially at his age.

I'm glad to know that Percy got the contract at Cessnock and from what he told me when I was home, it's a pretty big show. If he's really wishing he had his "young brother" to help him out maybe when I get sent back to a shore job he may be able to work it to get me out of the R.A.N. as I think that when I'm put ashore again I'll feel that the Navy hasn't much else to offer and as the end of the war is drawing close, I don't want to start behind in the race to get re-established. I think I've done my bit don't you? At anyrate that's a matter I can talk over with him, and you, when I do get my draft. Considering that I'm well on the way to 25 now, I do think that I'd be quite capable of taking over a responsible position for him and at least he could be sure of trusting me which is always a big point in an undertaking like his!

As you say in your 3rd letter you will reserve the congrats about the exam until the official results come through I might as well mention that they haven't been sighted YET. After all it's only 5 months since I sat for the exam and we must give them plenty of time to get organized – the goons! It makes me very cantankerous not to know for certain, even though I'm fairly sure, and I also have a natural curiosity to learn just what my marks were. However, as there was nothing in the last mail about it, I'm going to get the powers-that-be on-board to send a signal to Navy Office requesting details be signalled, because in the rare contingency that I have failed, I'll find the next exam (September) on me without preparation. The sooner I get my promotion the better I'll be pleased and incidentally I think at the same time along will come my draft. I'd like to leave the ship about the middle of Oct. and get down for a nice long leave in the glorious November weather.

I know where Jackie Chalk is stationed, but haven't seen him yet and don't really expect to get the chance either. I suppose Mrs. Bradshaw is nattering all about her son at the Canteen these days and I suppose she'll trot him in for the ladies' to inspect just like the other fond mothers do! I know that chap Payne that she referred to but don't have much to do with him – not my type I suppose. He just mentioned to me one day that Mrs. Brad. had asked after me.

See from your 4th letter that you were looking after Perce's place for him, but I should think that there would be a lot more pleasure in staying at a nice place like that than being helpmate to many others who issue you with "kind invitations". Since writing my No. 2 letter which you answer, I doubt if I'd had the chance to have a go at the piano onboard, but must somehow contrive to get at it during the coming week – I'd hate to get absolutely out of practice.

Those lemons I took away with me were very handy and as a matter of fact I still have a solitary one left but suppose I'd best use it before it goes mildewed. The jam is still going well and I have a little for breakfast every morning as a rule, and it helps that scanty meal quite a lot. I finished one of the jars the other day and went to look at the 3 that I had left – I was sure I had taken a jar of tomato jam with me, but apparently I was mistaken because I couldn't find one and I hardly think I'd have mislaid it. However, there was fig there, so that consoled me considerably and I'm onto it now.

You mention in this letter interest £1.18.1 in one of my bank books and I assume that is on the book that was locked in your box at 61 — that is Book No.16387. You also say something about another £1.15 but I don't know what it is for, so you'd best explain and also tell me which book it went into. When you next write let me know how much is in each book so I can check up with my records. It may sound miserly, or as if I don't trust you but keeping account of my savings gives me something to occupy my mind up here, and to see the growing balance is in some measure a small compensation for the time I spend away from home and mother.

My own news, as usual is not very startling, but the time seems to pass quite swiftly — if I'm working hard, as I am at present there is plenty to think about concerning the job, and if not busy, what could be better than a piece of canvas spread on the shade during the afternoon, a book and then a snooze when the book gets too "heavy". As regards work, the biggest bug-bear troubling us is the coming referendum. Naturally we have to organize the whole affair onboard and it's not the type of job I like very much but it must be done. I still don't feel very clear as to what it's all about!

I might mention that I won't need anyone to rock me to sleep tonight, as I have just spent the most enjoyable and most energetic afternoon since leaving home. Just after dinner, a couple of the seamen rushed up to me and asked me

if I'd like to go rowing and swimming for the afternoon. I just hesitated long enough to get permission from my boss, who is a pretty reasonable guy told me that I was entitled to some recreation, so at about 1 p.m. we pulled away in the ship's cutter. At first I was very keen, but after a mile or so, I simply occupied myself with dipping the oar in and trying to look as if I was rowing, and at the same time trying to save my hands, which by the way are now considerably blistered.

We rowed some three or four miles from the ship to where a river comes out, and went up this river a short distance and then beached the boat and it was all hands over the side — I leave it to your imagination the costume we wore. There was momentary panic once when a motor boat chugged downstream, and we thought there were women in it, but apparently this is a form of "troppo madness". The water was of course beautiful, almost warm and we swam, swam, swam allover the place like the three little fishies. It really felt marvellous to be driving the old body through the water again, and if only I could do that every afternoon, I'd be in tip top condition, and come back and win a couple of surf races right off.

A couple of the lads took the boat hook and knocked down a few coconuts of assorted ripeness and we had "afternoon tea". The green ones are of course full of "milk" with no "meat" at all and we found them very filling and topped up on a couple that were half ripe with the meat about the consistency of jelly, and then chewed the innards of a couple that were really ripe. A few wandering Yanks came along through the jungle carrying rifles etc. and it wasn't long before we were potting at birds etc. with their guns and swapping talk with them. They must have thought we were rare looking specimens as they asked us to pose for a photo and as they wanted to send it home we draped ourselves in palm fronds so that we wouldn't look unclothed. Their folk at home will really think that Aussies are savages when they see that picture.

After a little more swimming, the boat carrying the Yanks pulled out into midstream and we grabbed onto the available spots and got a tow through the water for some distance up the river. It was very quiet up there and hard to realize that war had been there.

Coming back. we hopped back in to do our share of rowing and after putting the Yanks down on shore again, continued on back to the ship, arriving

back with blistered hands, aching muscles, terrific thirsts and appetites — just the same a good time was had by all. Fortunately, the sun was not particularly troublesome during the afternoon, otherwise we should have been very sore — as it was only the fairer ones like myself showed much signs.

That seems to be the end of this chat Mums, so I'll bid you good-night. Just by the way, no newspapers have turned up yet, but I suppose all things come to those who wait — if they wait long enough!

All the best to those at home,

Your loving son,
Jim.

Letter No. 7
(Heavily Censored)

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
August, 1944

[censored]

Pleased to hear that broadcast mentioned Perce (Curvey) as getting a letter from his Mother and I do wish I could do something about him too, but apart from lending my weight up here, it seems that I must keep out of it as the Japs are very strict about any contacts with their P's O.W. and next of kin appear to be the only ones allowed to write. I'll be very glad to see him home safe again and only pray that he is okay now and stays that way.

Glad to see that you found a few of my old shipmates at Randwick Hospital and I retailed the information to the old mates of Wally Starr, Pete Lonergan and George Dudly and if you see them again give them my best. You must have got into the Hernia ward or something, because all the fellows you mention seeing went off with hernia – I think most of them would rather have that operation than stay up here with us.

That girl friend of Merle's Paddy seems intent on getting a family together doesn't she? It doesn't seem so long ago that I remember her as a single girl and now she has added twins to make the total three – not bad going. Get it all over whilst they're young and then they can sit back and bring them up and still be young enough to enjoy them when the kids get a bit older.

Hope you manage to get up to Harden for the church's Diamond Jubilee as you'll no doubt meet lots of old friends up there for the same purpose. You will probably get this letter before you leave, but providing you do go I should think the next one will have to be forwarded to you. By the way, is Merle kicking about not getting any mail from me? If she is, just tell her I can't work it in, and in any case I'm not writing to anyone until they write first.

One of the boys showed me a newspaper clipping through the week about young Peter Tonkin — don't know whether you saw it too. Appears the young idiot got into a brawl in town with a couple of West Indian seamen, I think they were, and one of them pulled a knife and slashed Peter across the face and it said he was taken to hospital and 20 stitches inserted. That'll learn him — be able to tell him from Paul quite easily now at anyrate. I only heard at the same time that he is living with Paul and Shirley, Paul's new wife in the family's flat at Coogee. I shouldn't think that would be a very satisfactory arrangement.

I had another very pleasant outing yesterday afternoon, going rowing in the ship's whaler which is a much smaller boat than the cutter we took out last Sunday and is much easier to row and less awkward to handle. We rowed over to the same spot, the river about three or four miles away from the ship and this time we organized some afternoon tea for ourselves. There were 9 of us in the boat and as the baker was with us we had no difficulty in getting a couple of loaves of bread, and somehow or other the others raked up the necessary tea, sugar, milk, butter and jam. We took a canister of fresh water and a new paint bucket for a "billy" and not until we had the fire going etc. we discovered that we had brought no cups with us. However, there were some Yanks nearby, most of whom were eating salted peanuts out of tins, so we got the empty tins from them and used them as dainty tea-cups. As you can imagine it was terribly hot with just thin tin between the tea and the hand, and we first howled with pain and then took steps to wrap shorts, hankies, or even leaves around them and the party was quite a success.

As usual we had plenty of swimming, and a boisterous game of "keep the ball away" — played though, with a coconut. The sun was a little warmer than on the previous outing, but I don't feel any ill effects now of the slight burn I was showing last night. We got back to the ship at about 5.30 and this trip I took an oar for the full distance and that kind of exercise should be good. Big trouble of course is soft hands, and I now have another blister to my collection. After being salt caked all the afternoon, you can readily understand that a warm wash was the "goods".

For a while it looked as if we were going to have a run of very good pictures on the ship, and as a matter of fact, through the week I sat out Mrs. Miniver again. Unfortunately it was spoiled at the end by the continual breaking down of the machine, and I didn't wait for the finish. Last night we had the cinema

on the foc'le, but it was pretty poor — "Sherlock Homes in Washington". The only good thing about having bad pictures, is that like in the old days down at the Club, it gives us something more to cry about the next day.

If you haven't already done so, I think it might be a good idea to get a parcel on the way to me, as my stocks are getting a little low now. I finished the last lemon during the week and considering the length of time, it kept very well. The jam is getting down to the last two jars which is not too bad but I hate to think what I would have done without it. I'm using both the powdered milk and the malted milk in conjunction at night before I turn in, and it makes a very nice night-cap mixed up with really cold water.

Work has been moderately heavy and looks like continuing so, but that is just as well because it does make the time pass a little more quickly. When I manage to get a larger breathing space than I have up till now, I think I'll beard the "fang bos'n" in his den and see if my teeth are up to the mark. I haven't been having any trouble with them, but as it is over 6 months since I was there last, he is bound to find something wrong with them I suppose. Owing to a fall on the steps, I have been getting around for over a week now with a white bandage on my shin near the ankle and am beginning to earn the name of "racehorse" and I get asked how my fetlock is. I don't think it's anything to worry about though, and a few more hot foments should clear it right up.

That's all for this time Mum, so for now Cheerio and regards to the folks at home –

Your loving son,
Jim.

Chapter 5

Tiger Territory: The Philippines Campaign (August 1944 – February 1945)

Letter No. 8

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
20th August, 1944[1]

Mom Dear,

This letter is hand-written just for a change as I'm writing it whilst reclining on the upper deck in the shade of a turret. Any irregularities in writing can be traced to the fact that I'm lying with my head propped on my left hand – it's comfortable, but has a bad result on writing.

Received your No. 6 dated 5/8/44 through the week and also 2 letters from Bubs, one from a girl I met at Katoomba (rather a surprise) and one from Miss Goodwin. Goodie is certainly hard to shake off and her letters vaguely irritate me as she's so darned enthusiastic about everything and so youthful. It must be a sign of age on my part to resent such things I guess.

In regard to the Masons – which Lodge was Dad in? – and also, where do they meet? If Perce is agreeable, I'd certainly like to join and go through at the same time as him. As I have your approval in the matter I'd like to get the papers sent up to me and have it started as soon as possible, so I'll leave it to you to arrange it with Rusty or Lofty.

I'll start looking out for the Anzacs you sent but as I was able to get two packets of biscuits at the Canteen a couple of days ago, I'll be right until they arrive. I also managed to get a tin of honey by stroke of luck and emptied it into one of the empty jam bottles, so it will help me eke out my jam supply which is getting low. I'd be in a poor way if I didn't have the little extras to help out the "pussa" meals!!

Offhand I can't remember the Lorrie Bastick you speak of, but might know

[1]JIM: I wrote a letter to Bubs today and posted it in an ordinary envelope. I'd be interested to know how the two compare for speed in arriving.

him by sight. By the way, as a matter of interest, I believe you spell MURTAGH not the way you have it!! Sorry to hear poor old Tuck passed on, but hope Josie gets the house.

As usual I haven't much startling news, just the same old routine. Haven't mentioned it in previous letters I don't think, but the rain at night has been a menace this trip. The sun keeps us sweating all day and as a rule when we "pipe-down" at night, the stars are out and the night is beautifully clear and it makes one feel "Ah – this is the life!" However, it is only very occasionally that I'm still on the upper deck when hands are called in the morn. Usually at some time after midnight, I wake to feel a spatter of rain and by the time I get sandals on and bed collected the deck is running with water and it's coming down by the bucketful. So down I go to spend the rest of the night sweltering below decks. Instead of "This is the life" – "What a life" is the thought wouldn't it!

Went ashore during the week with a recreation party and after I'd swam enough, I put on the old sandals I got in Durban and wandered out on the coral reef. The water is crystal clear and I pottered around admiring the coloured coral and the hundreds of types of brilliantly hued fish. (By the way – just had to move again – rain!) There was one type of fish that were coloured a real "electric" or iridescent blue – the prettiest colour I've ever seen. These little fish didn't seem a bit shy and swam quite happily round my feet. I picked up a nice little pad of coral which I've kept as it should make a nice paper-weight. Also gathered a dozen cats' eye shells which are quite beautiful – these also I took back to the ship, but when I inspected them the following morning – did they stink!! Wow... I had to ditch them and hated my hands for hours afterwards.

While slogging through the water on the reef I suffered a catastrophe – the remaining strap on my left sandal broke and that left me in a fix, because bare feet are no match for the sharp coral. I started to inch my way to shore when a good Samaritan - a Yank in a pair of stout boots, came along and took pity on me. At his invitation, I draped myself over his back and he gave me a pick-a-back to dry land. Not very dignified perhaps, but I was certainly grateful!

A rare treat for the boys yesterday – we had beer. Each man was allowed to buy 1 bottle! I drank mine, but it was warmish and drinking beer out of a thick china mug has always seemed a barbarous custom to me, so although it is available again today, I shan't indulge.

Our cinema had "Sergeant York" through the week and it was quite an enjoyable show and Gary Cooper took the part well. Somehow, he reminds me of Lofty – have you ever noticed it?

That's about all for now Mum. So till next time, cheerio and try not to let other peoples' problems and troubles worry you!

Your loving son,
Jim.

P.S. Received a Sunday Tele. sent by Merle and two from you during the week.

P.P.S. Saw the Dentist and he says I'm dentally fit – is that any good?

P.P.P.S. Referendum yesterday but somehow we didn't get the voting material sent to us – like our mail I suppose!

This wreckage was all that remained of the main street of Hollandia after the naval bombardment prior to the Allied landing, May 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017050)

Letter No. 9

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address. 27th August, 1944

Mom Dear,

Your letter No. 7 dated 11th Aug. arrived during the week together with one from Bubs that I hope to reply to later tonight. In view of my present dress – i.e. shorts, sandals and identification disc to complete the ensemble, it is hard to imagine you writing in front of the fire. However, we occasionally get a cold "snap" during the night such as I experienced whilst sleeping on deck a couple of nights ago. Before morning came I was wishing I had more than the rug and sheet that I usually only lie <u>on</u> not in.

Selling buttons for the Anzac House "Queen" wouldn't be a job I'd fancy, but I suppose you get a kick out of selling your quota and feeling that you've helped. As your candidate is "Gladys" she should have a good chance.

Poor old Pinto must have had a boring night when he supped at "61" with all Yeo-in-laws and relations. I can just imagine him as you say, being patient but <u>bored</u> by Cyril and his drivel, and by the subsequent poker-rummy. He deserves points for sticking by, but it was bad luck that you two couldn't have a little chat, especially regarding what I said re the Masons. I'll be looking forward to the package he kindly donated too!

It's a nice idea of yours to make that present to St. Paul's, M'burrah and I'm glad (and a little surprised) that Percy is helping you with the cost.

Very surprised to hear of old Tuck's lousy move and I suppose poor Jo was rather hurt not to get a favourable mention in his will. Shows that it's not very wise to depend on expected benefits such as legacies.

Had the urge to make up on sleep one day through the week, and as I was okay to go ashore with Recreation Party I thought I'd have a nice little swim

and then a hearty sleep in the shade. The craft taking us from ship to shore was barely half way, when down it came – rain by the buckets. Contrary to the usual form up here it didn't quit in a half hour either but kept going steadily all the afternoon. The rain was quite cold and diving into the sea water gave a noticeable rise in temperature. So we did the only possible thing, stayed in the water almost all the afternoon and like the little fishies, we swam and swam. Somebody found an old raft and we fooled around with it for hours and the horseplay and inevitable tippings over were reminiscent of the old days on pontoons at Manly or Neilsen Park.

After my exertion I was pretty hungry and just a wee bit cold when we returned to the ship and for once I was glad to have stew for supper.

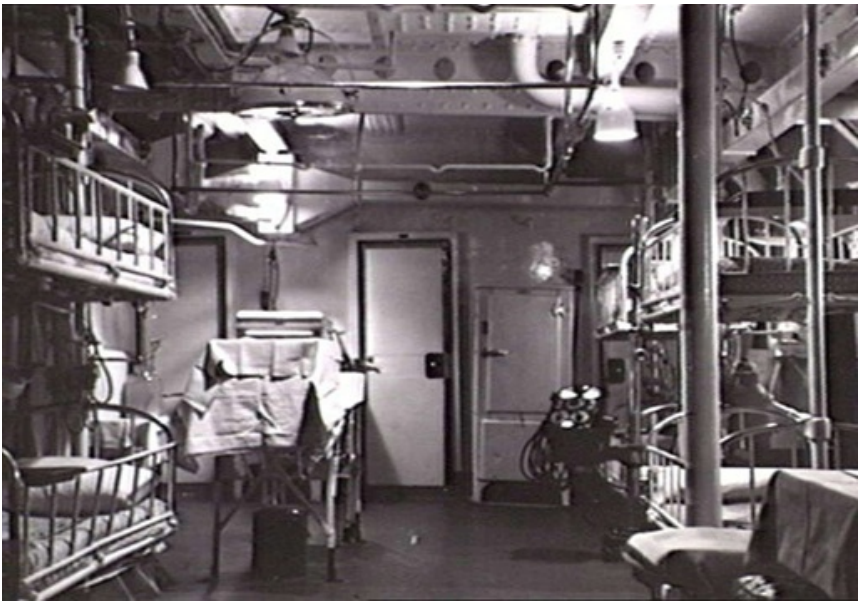
Just at present my watchkeeping at sea presents a problem as I have temporarily lost the services of two fellow watch-keepers. One of them went with us on the rowing expedition a couple of weeks ago and apparently a germ went through the blisters on his right hand and it poisoned and became swollen just as mine did 3 years ago. It was necessary for them to make several cuts into his hand and he was given a general anaesthetic; he's improving now but is "off duty". The other one "off duty" is Col Curtis who is in bed in Sick Bay with a poisoned foot – probably due to a coral cut. Good job that I'm comparatively hale and hearty or they'd be finding it necessary to get a new set of watch-keepers in the Plot.

The other day I was initiated into the mysteries of Chess. I'd never seen a game played before, but after having the play explained I acquitted myself quite well by playing a draw with my "teacher". It's a very interesting game and I'll have to see if I can get some more practice at it.

No need to comment much on the war news which is very cheering at present. With Paris liberated and Rumania changing to our side, it looks like the prelude to the final crumble and then Japan will take its medicine in full – maybe you'd best give my civvie suits a good brushing in readiness. The sooner the better methinks. At any rate it gives us great hopes doesn't it?

Cheerio for now Mum,

Your fond son,
Jim.



An operating table (left rear) and bunks in the sick bay of Shropshire, where Jim's fellow watch-keepers were recovering, 1946. (Australian War Memorial, 125057)

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PARIS LIBERATED AFTER FOUR YEARS

PATRIOTS AND POLICE OVERCOME GERMAN GARRISON

THOUSANDS JOIN IN FOUR-DAY BATTLE

Sweeping American Advance In South France

LONDON, Aug. 23 (A.A.P.).—Paris, after four years of German rule, is once again in French hands. The capital has been freed by French Forces of the Interior after four days' fighting.

Fifty thousand armed patriots went over to the offensive on Saturday morning against the remaining German garrison. They were quickly supported by several hundred thousand French men and women, who, though unarmed, joined in the struggle.

After bitter fighting the German garrison was driven from the city and French forces are now in possession of all public places. Vichy officials who had not fled were arrested.

Meanwhile, American troops in southern France, after a spectacular 140-mile advance from their landing points, have entered Grenoble and are now only 34 miles from Lyons.

German resistance appears to have collapsed everywhere in France except along the lower reaches of the Seine, where the retreating remnants of the Seventh Army are being covered by pursuer units. British correspondents on the Spanish border report a fresh Allied landing near Bordeaux, Bay of Biscay, but this is not yet confirmed.

ALLIED LANDING NEAR BORDEAUX REPORTED

Several sources report a new Allied landing in the Bordeaux area, co-ordinating with an attack by French and American troops, presumably thrusting south from Nantes.

According to messages received in London, the landing was made near Arcachon, within the last pocket of organised German resistance in southern France.

French forces on land formed assemblies into the air to mark their positions. Then Allied troops and shells began to pour into the beach area held by the Germans and Allied troops entered ashore under cover of an intense aerial and naval bombardment which lasted an hour and could be heard in Bordeaux, 30 miles away, it is said.

News of the landing was given by General de Gaulle, commander of the French Forces of the Interior in a special communique broadcast from France.

The communique stated: "On Saturday morning the National Council of Resistance and the Paris Committee of Liberation, in agreement with the national Allied landing in the Bordeaux area, co-ordinating with an attack by French and American troops, presumably thrusting south from Nantes.

"About 30,000 armed members of the French Forces of the Interior, supported by several hundred unarmed patriots, went into action.

"The Paris police who had been on strike rejoined the police headquarters. They also seized the Hotel de Ville, the prefecture, in which they defied all German attacks.

"Yesterday, after four days' fighting, the Germans were beaten everywhere, and the patriots were in possession of all public places. Vichy members had fled or had been arrested.

"The people of Paris have thus played a vital part in liberation the capital, which had been in the hands of the Germans since the morning of June 14, 1940, when German motorised units entered the city."

Ile de la Cite is an island in the Seine, in the heart of Paris. The cathedral of Notre Dame and the Palais de Justice are on the island, which is joined by 4 bridges to Ile de St. Louis.

The Lord Mayor of London Sir Frank Newson-Smith, sent a telegram to Herriot, the Speaker of the Council of the Republic of Paris, congratulating the workers and Provisional governors of London on their supreme moment of victory."

All stations of the French North African broadcasting system, including Algiers, Mostaganem and Rabat, repeatedly announced at ringing tones, "Paris is liberated."

The Governor-General of Algeria General Catroux, ordered the immediate hoisting of flags on all public buildings, appealed to the people to bathe their houses, and announced artillery salutes and the ringing of all church bells to-night.

Later Algiers Radio broadcast an appeal to Parisians to safeguard food supplies.

"The French Provisional Government is now overseas of the extraordinary privations which the people of Paris have suffered during the past few weeks," said the announcer. "Its first care is to see that there are now as possible food supplies delivered to the capital. Its second duty must be the reorganisation of transport to permit the arrival of necessary foodstuffs."

To-day's communique dealing with southern France after indicated the swift advance in Grenoble area. American troops had the effective co-operation of French Forces of the Interior in their drive. Towns taken en route include Digne, Barcelonnette, Aspres Sisp, Saint Bonnet, and Gap.

Allied armoured columns are now 34 miles from Lyons, while other forces are at the gates of Avignon.

South of Paris according to Algiers Radio, an American column has crossed the Seine and reached the Marne at Meaux 37 miles west-north-west of Paris.

WHEN THE NAZIS RODE AS VICTORS

This illustration, based on a photograph taken on June 14, 1940, shows the invading German troops marching down the Champs Elysees in Paris, their triumphant helmets the Allied forces. The liberation of the city was accompanied by General Koenig, commander of the French Forces of the Interior yesterday.

FLYING-BOMB ATTACKS MOUNTING

Allied Threat to Bases

LONDON, August 23 (A.A.P.).—With Allied armies getting into position to threaten their Pas de Calais launching sites, the Germans are stepping up their flying-bomb attacks on London and southern England.

Two attacks launched before and after dawn to-day were more sustained than usual.

CURTAIN OF ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE

A stream of bombs came across the Channel in rapid attack. Anti-aircraft batteries and the Royal Air Force met the attack.

The number of thousands of northern France launching sites or some were destroyed or damaged.

The number of flying-bombs launched in the 24 hours ended at 6 a.m. yesterday was 104. Of these 68 were destroyed by fighters and anti-aircraft guns. Four others fell in the defence of a balloon barrage. Thirty-two crossed the coast, and 24 of these were destroyed by fighters and anti-aircraft guns. One other crossed the coast but was destroyed by fighters over the sea.

Of the 31 which crossed the coast and fell inland without being shot down, 23 fell in the London area, and the rest in other parts of the country. Casualties and damage in the London area are still being investigated.

DAILY "BATTLE OF AUTOBAHNS"

OUR STAFF CORRESPONDENT

LONDON Aug. 23.—The daily battle between the Flying-bomb has become the concern thing the world has seen in a battle of extermination.

Every mechanical aid, all that can be invented in the present battle is a mechanical, anti-clutching battle, and the new weapons gain of a flying-bomb dropping from the sky with a load of explosive. The flying-bomb as a land explosive is the world battle now. There are the battle of guns, shells and rocket projectiles on the other visual indication of how the battle is going. But in the flying-bomb we have a new weapon.

DEPOTS IN DANGER

Anti-aircraft troops operating across the Seine are believed to be meeting the flying-bombs launched from the Pas de Calais launching sites. Allied artillery will be assisted considerably by the capture of the Pas de Calais depots.

The Germans have had difficulty in launching the flying-bombs because of the Allied air attacks on the launching establishments. Photos show that the launching sites have been damaged by bombs. Photographs of the launching sites were secured from low-flying aircraft. Photographs of the launching sites were secured from low-flying aircraft. Photographs of the launching sites were secured from low-flying aircraft.

Letter No. 10

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address. 3rd September, 1944

Mom Dear,

Tons of mail arrived on Friday - millions of letters, papers and parcels and I can't complain at my share of them. Your letter No. 8 was amongst those present, so I'll get to work on the necessary replies to it. Notice that you didn't join the throng to have a peek at the Hope bloke[2] and judging from all the references to him and his party in the papers and letters he must have made quite a stir in the old home town. I'd like to see him do his stuff, but can't see much fun in waiting hours in a crowd just to have a look at him in the flesh! I very much doubt if we'll see him or any of his fellow celebrities on here, because after all, we're only Aussies. From what I remember of Myrtle's piano, it wasn't a very fine example of craftsmanship, but if it's done up, it will give me a bit of entertainment if I'm out at Perce's and at a loss for something to do! Funny man Pinto, isn't he, not wishing to part with his piano, even though nobody except me plays it at their place, but maybe he still intends having another crack at it when I can get back to tutoring him.

Had a couple of letters from Bubs in the mail, and in one of them she enclosed Lodge forms signed etc. by Rusty and Lofty, so I filled them in and returned them in my letter to her yesterday and hope everything in that direction is under control and also that Percy has also made the intial steps towards joining.

I think after Friday's mail, I've just about got all my papers now, but the trouble is, that now they're here, I've hardly got a chance to do more than glance through them, and now have a big stack waiting for the time when I've plenty of leisure. That's how it is with the mail of course, either a drought or a flood! The parcel of lemons that Bubs sent arrived too, but I'm afraid the venture wasn't a success - the only way to do it, would be to send them in a

[2] Jim is referring to American comedian Bob Hope

sealed tin. As it was, they were knocked about somewhat, and when I opened the parcel, I found just a sodden, brown, lemony mass, which I lost no time in committing to the sea. I had the consolation of two tins of biscuits from you and also the one containing Minties and Pinto's gift and I'll write to him later and duly thank him. As usual, the biscuits were fine and I had to restrain myself from simply squatting down and wolfing the whole lot at one go - I'll ration myself.

Naturally with all this conglomeration of mail, there was plenty of official correspondence to keep us busy and included amongst it at long last, were the results of my exam for which I've waited (not patiently) for so long. However, it turned out as I'd heard - I passed alright and topped the list by a small margin. There were 25 candidates for the exam. and only 9 besides myself got through, so you can see it wasn't a push-over for everybody. The pass-mark was 360 and I scored 502 out of 600, so you can see that I got a really good pass. What tickles me is the fact that I topped the marks for the Captain's Office section by a goodly margin, and yet at the time of the exam had only had a couple of days actual Captain's Office experience. In the Ship's Office section I shared the lead with some other chap, and scored 83% in Arithmetic and 88% in typing, so I think I can feel justly pleased at my effort.

Now of course, it's a matter of waiting until my seniority takes me to the top of the roster and I hope that shan't be too long. At anyrate, I can go ahead and buy my new badges and buttons in anticipation so that I won't be caught by short stocks when the time comes.

Noticed in a draft note the other day that my old Melbourne friend Lyn Waller has been drafted to Flinders to do the course for Pay Sub. Merle might be interested.

During the week, they pushed another innoculation into me and for a wonder it had no greater affect than to make my arm sore for a couple of days. I had begun to think I was "allergic" to innoculations. Must be millions of mixed wogs coursing round in my blood-stream by now.

I think I mentioned in my last letter that I'd had my first game of chess, and since then have acquired a chess set of my own and have fought many stirring battles over the checkered board - being thrashed mostly, but occasionally com-

ing out on top. It's a wonderfully fascinating game though Mum, and I'll have to see if I can teach you to play so that I can get my revenge for the beatings you gave me at Draughts.

Of late, there have been a run of pictures onboard that I have seen. Most of them are pretty old and it's not until the show starts that I realize I've seen it, as the title doesn't mean much. One night we had the "Mark of Zorro" which I discovered I'd seen, and at anyrate sat on in the steady rain as it was a fairly entertaining show. After about 6 reels we had just come to the interesting part, when the machine broke down and we had no more and were very derogatory in our remarks to the film operators for letting us sit in the rain and not giving us the satisfaction of seeing the end of the film. Another funny incident occurred during the pictures one night when they showed a short of Community Singing with the words popping on the screen - you know the type! In one song, the screen instructed the boys to sing a couple of lines, and then the "girls" sing a couple, sort of in reply. The affect was amazing when the "girls" section came on - almost all the lads sang it in a high, reedy falsetto, and then dropped down to basso profundo when the "boys" lines came on. Everybody enjoyed it so much that they wanted it run again!

Once again, as from today, I'm back in the old office which is lovely and airy and light compared to the hole we've been working in for some time, and I do relish the change.

You'll notice that today is the fifth anniversary of the start of the War, and I'm sure we're now entering the last year of it, thank goodness. I can just remember back five years - it was a Sunday night too, and I was down in Kelland's flat when the news came over the radio. A lot of things have happened since then that we couldn't possibly have imagined then. I remember that the last 3rd September I was in South African waters, and wondered then where I'd be this time, but I hope the next 3rd Sep. will find me well and truly at home with you. We certainly can't complain about the news these days and it seems incredible the speed they're crushing down on old Adolph's home ground - about time the Germans saw the game played on their own pitch, and what wouldn't I give to be in London when the lights go on - I'll bet Mrs. Stanghan is brushing the cobwebs off her bottle of champagne by now!!

Well Mother, that's all for now - hope the Harden trip went O.K.

Your loving son,
Jim.

Large crowds welcomed American comedian Bob Hope and his party of entertainers when they arrived at their Sydney hotel, 15 Aug. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, P00561.040)

Letter No. 11

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address. 9th September, 1944

Mom Dear,

Had a nice little mail last night - one from Bubs, Pinto, my old Chief "Tug" Wilson and your No. 9. From what you and Bubs say, it looks as though I have plenty of parcels on the way, but I expect that by the time they get to me I'll have finished all my gum and the biscuits and will be ready for more. It's just as well my family looks after me - the organizations that used to send me stuff seem to have packed up. I suppose the war has been going longer than they first expected and they've got a little tired!

From what you say, it seems that Peter's little dust-up has caused quite a fuss in the family circle, but I certainly can't see them getting any place by suing the military in regard to Peter's good looks. From what I hear, he's got a draft and is going or has gone to a destroyer.

If you see Kath again, see if you can get some details of the car (the "Wolseley") they have up for sale, and if it's 15 horse power or under, see if you can get Percy to have a look at it and see whether it might be "my type" and at my price.

You're certainly moving around - National Park, Harden etc. but I suppose it's not exactly comfortable at home now and only hope the situation clears up somewhat before I come back as a permanent lodger.

Thanks for the Art Union ticket Mother - I can see I'll have to look after it carefully as it isn't drawn till mid-December - what fun if we got first or second, eh!

As I said before, had a letter from Pinto and that bright boy tells me of his flittings to Bowral and Wallacia for a week apiece, golfing and what-not. He tells me that he met Col Ayres's girl, Pat Thornton from work up at Wallacia. She seems to be having plenty of holidays lately as she was at "Sans Souci" the

fortnight before we went up there.

The letter from Tug was in answer to one of mine, and he said he was glad to hear from me, but knew that I'd want something. He sounds the same old Tug, and apologised for typing his answer, but said he was too busy to do it "handraulic" - sounds a good word! At anyrate, I asked him to find out where I stood on the roster for P.O. and from what he tells me, it looks like a good 6 months before I'll be made - which under the circumstances is quite a blow as I thought I'd be a moral for next month. He says the best thing to do is to hop into the Commission business, but the way things stand now, I wouldn't be able to start a course until January and that would mean May before I got my Commission. However, I think for the present I'll say nothing, and if I get sent down to do the course, I won't worry about it unduly, and just sort of go for the "ride" not caring whether I pass or fail particularly, but taking it as a sort of a change and a rest from the usual routine. A bit of a mess isn't it?

It's getting harder and harderer to write a coherent letter these days, because you must know the routine off by heart now. Had one swim during the week, pictures a couple of nights, finished off a book and of course got more involved with my chess.

Actually we had a couple of good pictures this week - good by my standards at anyrate - a couple of good musicals, "Reveille with Beverly" and Fred Astaire in "You were never lovelier" and one I've wanted to see for a long time - "Pygmalion". Unfortunately our screen and sound made a bit of a mess of the last-named picture, but I got the gist of it, and liked the parts that I managed to comprehend.

A new Midshipman joined through the week, and after I heard his name, I realised that he was one of the Club juniors, one of those who joined since my hey-day, but he recognised me and we had a chat about the club and the local gossip. He tells me that Kenny Foster came home and brought his new bride from the West. I'll bet he got some mixed receptions.

Well Mama, I must end this off, as I want to get it on the mail and I think I'm cutting it a bit fine. Cheerio to all the folks on the home-front, thank Mrs. Marris for her good wishes and don't forget to look after yourself, and don't let people get you down.

All my love, your affectionate son,
Jim.

Men from the shell room of HMAS Shropshire, where the temperature is always well over 100 degrees F., come up for fresh air, Sep. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017641)

8-inch gun-crews on HMAS Shropshire relax after their successful bombardment of Morotai, Sep. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017669)

Letter No. 12

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
17th September, 1944

Mom Dear,

Have just re-read your letter No.9 which I answered hurriedly a week ago, but find that I covered the necessary answers in my letter. Honestly this letter scribing is beginning to make great demands on me – especially as regards to memory and imagination. I know, however, that you worry a wee bit about me and that the weekly letter is re-assuring and while reporting the state of my health etc. I might as well try to make a readable letter.

Well, let's start with the food front! Remember me telling you I had managed to get some honey to eke out my jam supply – I was doing quite well with it and had used almost half the jar when I lost it through my own fault. Left the jar on the table at breakfast and didn't give it another thought until breakfast the following day. Now I'm almost through the melon jam and only one jar left, so I hope there is some in the Goodlands' parcel. One tin of biscuits is finished and I've made a start on the other. I took one of my empty jam jars, filled it with Anzacs and put it in my emergency kit. As it's air-tight they should keep for a long time. Didn't get a supply of Fishers this time but I seem to have got along alright without it recently.

The weather is always a diverting subject in this region and I'm glad to report that the last couple of nights have been fine and in fact I was quite cold sleeping on the upper deck last night. The weather, humidity, moisture sweat etc have ruined the nice new sandals I had when at home and I'm barely keeping them together with brass clips from the office – only hope they last the trip out. That doesn't mean I want the others sent either – if the sandals do fall apart I'll make do somehow. The chain Bubs gave me has also "had it". Its former silver is now a delicate shade of black and the heat has apparently expanded the links which break at the slightest pretext.

Apparently the weather affects other things because my skin sores have showed marked improvements in the past few days. You'll remember me mentioning some trouble with my right shin several weeks ago and it has been bandaged or covered with plaster ever since. Last week just to even things up, I ran into the wooden end of somebody's stretcher as I was creeping round at midnight. This ripped considerable flesh off my left shin and didn't improve my right one and after visiting Sick Bay the following day, I looked like a race horse with two bandaged fetlocks. Good job I haven't got 4 legs or I'd manage to maim the other two as well. Seeing all the sores and scars on my legs reminds me of my scooter days when the old shins used to get a horrible thrashing. Speaking of the Sick Bay – I had another visit for inoculation – the second. Once again I bore up quite well and suffered only a stiff arm from what used to be quite an ordeal for me.

What with work and other things lately, I haven't been able to make an appointment with "my hairdresser". He isn't the only one on the ship but I prefer to stick to the one style of cut. The result is that I'm beginning to look like a cross between Rhett Butler and an English sheepdog. Moreover it's too hot to be comfortable so I'll have to remedy the situation very soon.

More chaps from the first draft that went to England with me have left the ship and I find that there is less than half of us "old veterans" left. By the way it is just 1 year 11 months since I first sailed out of the Harbour, so my time must be nearly up as far as being a "deep-sea" sailor is concerned. As with all things, we appreciate more when we are about to be deprived and I suppose that although I grumble about present conditions, in a couple of years I'll have forgotten the seamy side and during a cold, windy September at home, will think wistfully perhaps of the everlasting Summer when the days rig was sandals and shorts only.

Then too, I suppose I'll recall sentimentally the hundreds of times I saw the sun rise and set at sea, with clouds making a different "painter's dream" every time. Then the nights I've stood in the bow of the ship watching the black water slide past and seeing the myriad little lights in it caused by the phosphorescent marine creatures coming into contact with our bow wave. So I suppose the moral is to take the best of everything that is offering at the time and leave the regrets for later. However, when I do get my draft, I expect that civilisation will offer many practical considerations for the loss of the natural beauties

I mentioned above. Shifts are in the air now and my immediate boss has his marching orders and will leave for Melbourne when his relief comes onboard. I think he is well pleased with his move and personally I'll be sorry to see him go.

By the way, I tackled my Horlicks last night and found on opening the tin that the remnants were dried into hard lumps that are absolutely useless for making drinks but should make good sweets!!

Hope you had an enjoyable stay at the old home town and no doubt I'll have your report in the next mail. Noticed in an old Sunday Tele. a question sent in by Mrs Peterson, 44 Swift Street – do you know her?

That's all for now Mum, so till next time.

Cheerio and all my love,
Jim.

P.S. Censor has given permission to mention that we helped in the latest punch-in-the-nose that Hirohito's gang got at Morotai Island – I'm still very much okay so don't worry![3]

[3]The battle of Morotai began at 6:30 on the morning of 15 September. Shropshire and other allied warships conducted a two-hour long bombardment of the landing area to suppress any Japanese forces there in preparation for waves of American troops to land that morning. Morotai was selected as the location for air bases and naval facilities needed to support the liberation of the Philippines in late 1944.

Oerlikon gunners at their battle station, alert and prepared for any Japanese Aircraft, Sep. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017635)

A Shropshire gunnery commander gives instructions to Direction Control Personnel on the eve of battle, Sep. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017650)

Letter No. 13

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
23rd September, 1944

Mom Dear,

No letter to reply to this trip, so I'll do the best I can to cook up a letter off my own bat. I'm sure you must now know in advance what I'm going to write about, but as I said, I can only do ma best ma'am.

Before I get started, there were a couple of queries I meant to put in previous letters and usually forgot. Actually I'd brought them up in letters a long time ago, and I'm not sure whether you've had the letters and forgot to reply to these things, or whether the replies are still on the way. Firstly, my old watch is finding these tropics pretty hard going, and is looking very discoloured and I wondered if you'd had my good watch overhauled and cleaned etc. so it will be in readiness when "my ship comes in". The watch-band is falling to pieces too, and as the band with my good watch was not exactly first class, would you try to get me another band for it - just an ordinary band, not one of the cover variety.

Secondly, I remember asking you to let me know how my Bank A/cs stood, just as a check on my figures and as a matter of interest, so will you also have a look into that.

Yesterday, some of the chaps went "seining" - that is towing a fishing net to the shore, and dragging it up on the beach, where the fish if any, are taken from the net. They had quite a good catch yesterday, so I thought it would do no harm to put in an hour or so this afternoon, fishing over the side with the line Bub sent me. Somehow, I don't think I was cut to be a fisherman, or else I had the wrong bait, because I didn't get a solitary bite, and thus did not get the desired fish to supplement my ordinary food. The spur to my fishing effort I might add, was the lovely smell that came from the freshly cooked fish the lucky

ones had for breakfast this morn whilst I had to do my best with a helping of liver - a dish as you well know that never did appeal to me.

During the week, I had a lovely afternoon away from the ship - leaving at 1 p.m. and returning at 6.30. We landed at a beach where the sand was clean and fine, and the water, though rather shallow, was clear and as usual, quite warm. The surroundings were the best I've seen, and the jungle was typically a la Hollywood in technicolour. At any moment, I expected a full orchestra to strike up, and to see Dorothy Lamour, sarong-clad, beckoning me to join her in a plate of fruit salad or something. Maybe that was a bit much to expect, and the only females I sighted were a trifle darker than Dot and not quite my type!

However, I spent the first hour very agreeably in the water, doing a swim of quite a distance, and then joining the lads who were scrimmaging with a water polo ball. After coming out of the water, I regaled myself for about another hour on coconut "milk" - the coconuts were provided in large numbers by one of our Able Bodies who could climb the palms as well as our alleged ancestors. Nearly every nut had a different flavour, and I certainly tried enough of them, and some of them were quite big and held, I should say, about a quart of juice. After that session, there is never any question of salts!! The sun gave off its best too, and although I didn't remain in the open for long at any one time, I showed the effects of Old Sol upon my return to the ship. In all, it was the best afternoon I've spent up this way, and if they could only install a surf like Bronte, I shouldn't mind investing in real estate in the locality.

Our poor cinema, about which you've heard so much at different times, has been retired temporarily for repairs. Last night we were in the middle of a "Western", always popular with the boys, when the projector gave up the ghost, and we had to guess the end of the show. We had a laugh the other night - part of the newsreel was devoted to selling War Bonds to the folks back home in the "States", and we were exhorted "not to leave the theatre without buying Stamps or Bonds from the box in the desk in the foyer". You can imagine the reception that announcement received.

I think that's my best effort for now Mum, and let's hope that before writing again, I'll have some mail (& parcels, I hope) to reply to.

As ever, your loving son,

Jim.

Sarong-clad Dorothy Lamour in "Road to Singapore", 1940.

Letter No. 14

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
2nd October, 1944

Mom Dear,

I didn't write my usual week-end screed yesterday as I was feeling a pretty sick boy - those stinking inoculations! They jabbed me yet again on Saturday and by the time I was ready to turn in at night, the stuff was really ready to go to work. At anyrate I spent a very lousy night and woke up feeling as if I'd played a hard game of football the previous afternoon, followed by a night of drinking cheap wine. I was sore in every muscle and what a head! This continued throughout the day, although I managed to go to Communion in the morning. The padre gets quite a good attendance at his Communions lately and I saw that the Captain was there setting a good example. During the afternoon I took time off from work and had quite a satisfactory sleep on the upper deck under cover luckily, as it began raining heavily after a while. Following supper, I had several hours on the "upper" in the bright moonlight and I think the gentle breezes etc. helped clear my head somewhat and I turned in feeling much better and woke this morning feeling 100% on yesterday. I think (and hope) that is my last innoc. for some time now, but the Sick Bay gave me the glad news that I'll soon be due for a renewal of my vaccination so I'm definitely not looking forward to that.

As usual, our mail situation has been potty, with the result that I have your No. 13 letter received yesterday to answer, but am missing about 3 in between. Our mail was supposed to be held for us at X, but when we got there, it was found that it had been sent off only a day or so previously to Y - so, no mail! Or I should say, no letter mail. I had consolations however, because the parcel sent by Bubs and the cake from Merle came onboard, and both opened up to my entire satisfaction. Bubs selection was quite good and the cake was very fresh and moist. The cake tin had been knocked about a bit, so that once I got the

lid off I wouldn't have been able to get it back on, so I tipped the cake into your biscuit tin that had just been emptied.

Apparently you are not the only one to see "Four Jills and a Jeep" as Miss Goodwin mentioned it in a letter - she's persistent, isn't she. By the way, the four girls in that picture came to London at about the same time as we first arrived and I remember hearing their first broadcast over the BBC in a show compéred by Jack Buchanan. Carole Landis wrote the original story of their journey, but believe the studio changed it round a lot.

The R.S.S.L haven't wasted time in trying to put the harness on me, have they - sending Art Union tickets. Hope Cyril's personality is sufficient to sell them all. As you're keeping one for me, I have a lot to look forward to if my luck is good.

Certainly bad luck for young Bill Beresford - cases like his should make us realize that our troubles are pretty trivial!

One night through the week, we had a very good double cinema programme and although I'd seen both pictures (both with you too, I think) I enjoyed the show very much. The first picture was "Blues in the Night" that I saw at the "Plaza" before leaving for the States two years ago. You may remember we went on Gordon's recommendation as there was a very good pianist. The other show definitely had whiskers on it - Bing Crosby's "Pennies from Heaven" that I saw at Katoomba in January 1937, when we stayed at the Majestic. It was still good, but little things like the heroine's hats etc. gave us a few laughs not in the script.

A friend of mine on board, nick-named Lofty, seemed to have actually been putting on weight lately, and as that is such a miracle up here, I had to ask him if that was right. He told me that he'd put on 9 lbs. in a month up here since cutting out smoking, so as I could do with a few extra pounds, I decided to see if I could successfully cut it out too with the same results. So far, this is my seventh smokeless day and I seem to be getting along okay, but I don't promise that I'll be able to keep it up till I get home, although I'll try. The trouble is that there is so little to do up here, only "Smoke, sweat and swear" as one of the lads said.

Fortunately, the time goes speedily enough for me as I've plenty of work to keep me busy and the weeks seem to glide around. Sometimes, looking back

it seems only a very short time since I was home and at others, I hardly seem to have been at home at all during the past two years. Well, I suppose my sea-time is getting pretty near its close and I'll try to make the best of what's left. It wouldn't need much longer for me to set a record for the time of a Writer on one ship - in this War at anyrate.

That's all this time Mum, so give my regards to the folks at home, especially a cheerio to Aunty and I hope it won't be long now.

Your loving son,
Jim.

P.S. By the way, I just remembered that it's exactly a year today since I got home from England! It seems much longer.

Letter No. 15

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
8th October, 1944

Mom Dear,

Strictly in keeping with nature's jokes up here is the old saying "it never rains but what it pours" – that applies to more than the weather. Take the mail situation 'frinstance! In recent letters I've been crying of the lack of mail, and in this one I have Nos. 10,11,12 and 14 for replies - No. 13 I replied to last week.

Well Mother, I'll get down to it - No. 10 was my first advice about your Harden trip and I'm glad that you did actually get away and had a little change for a while, although I can quite see that too much of Harden would be rather indigestible. Very nice to know that the Diamond Jubilee went off well and that your vase was dedicated by the Bishop of Goulburn. As per your request, I have written a letter to Rene, so stand by for a screed from her soon telling you what a "nice boy" I am (as if you didn't already know!).

It certainly didn't take you long to get someone to take Gran's house, but it gives me the pip to think that you're the only one in that huge family that can get things done. Only hope there are no requests for board and lodging for Gran at "61". There won't be many of the old crowd left up there soon.

I've considered a few days at National Park as you suggest, but it is still in the "salt air zone" and maybe I'll stick to the Valley again. I've never had a disagreeable time down there, but may try Pippens for a change.

From the cutting you sent, the Queen Competition had a wonderful run and the £325,000 ought to be a big help for the Anzac House - much better than erecting yet another useless marble memorial.

I know the chap Sherwin you mention, and as a matter of fact took him under my wing when he first joined the ship, but don't have a great deal to do

with him now. Mentioned Ivy Dawney to him and had him very puzzled for quite a while as he couldn't make out how I knew her.

You were very fortunate in having pleasant company in the train on the way back but the train service must be going off to be $1\frac{1}{4}$ hours late. Apparently the weather at the time was not very choice and I suppose Merle and "Squirrel" weren't very happy having to wait so long.

I'm very pleased to know that Aunty got another card from Perce and those people who put doubts into her mind about his writing ought to be put on the rack themselves. I only hope he's sticking it out okay and that his mind is holding up.

If everyone, (as I feel sure will,) sends me a copy of the Naval edition of the Women's Weekly, I'm going to have a busy time. I suppose almost every chap on the ship will get one or two of that issue sent to him so that we'll be pretty sick of seeing it before we're through.

Couldn't understand what the black tape was tied around your No. 14 letter - thought it must be mourning for someone. Don't worry about the chain breaking - it does that every day, but I just link it together again and hope for the best without swearing too much.

I'm very pleased to tell you that the knocks I had on my legs have quite cleared up now, and in fact I haven't been near the Sick Bay for any treatment whatever for about 10 days now - quite a record!

Speaking of my Scotch hostess - Col just showed me a letter he had from Mr. Allison, very nicely written as usual, giving news about each member of the family including the dog, and also congratulating Col on having married. That was the first letter lazy Col had written to tell him the news I believe. Mr. A is very tickled because Col's wife is Ann and that is the name of his elder daughter, so if you intend sending those gloves, you'll know her name. If I can judge correctly, I think that she would be about 16 years of age now, so how would the gloves be. There is also a little girl who is about 11 or 12 - that's Susan.

You may be surprised to learn that the inimitable Peter T. is coming back to the ship. I'll bet there is something behind it all, and I guess I'll find that out in due course. Had a letter from my Durban girl through the week - 7 pages.

She always enquires about Peter's matrimonial affairs etc. and of course by the time I write and tell her one thing, the whole situation is changed by the time I receive her reply and so it's very difficult. She still hadn't got my letter where I told her Pete was no longer on the ship and now that will have to be revised too.

As usual my week's doings don't amount to very much and by now you can just about guess my routine. One new item was that I have further improved my domestic capacity by making (successfully too) my first jelly. Remember the B.M.I jellies that Bubs sent along... I saw the Captain's pantryman who is kindly disposed to me, and from him borrowed a china jug. The boiling water was an easy matter and I stirred the mixture with the aid of one of the Captain's long spoons. I then took one of the empty jam jars I brought from home and poured in the mixture, and after allowing it to cool somewhat, placed it in the Captain's 'frig overnight. When I went along in the morning, it had jelled very nicely and it made a welcome addition to the somewhat scanty breakfast. I shared it with Geoff Stokes, the chap that went to Cambridge with me.

Managed to forsake the ever-present threat of work one afternoon, and go ashore for a very agreeable afternoon of swimming and sun. Somebody had rigged and moored a wooden pontoon with a rough diving board about 100 yards out, and I had quite a lot of fun as leader for "follow-the-leader" diving. There was some talk of a game of water polo against another ship this afternoon, but I think the fellows onboard are either too tired, lazy or something, because I don't think they can get a full team - blame the weather.

I've just finished a small bottle of American beer - very weak in comparison with our own brew. Just for a change, we are allowed to have one bottle with the top on, to be drunk at our leisure, as well as one with the top off, and I have made suitable arrangements for cooling my second bottle and it should be very nice just before supper. The one I just finished was a trifle on the warm side and very gassy. Just in case you think two bottles is a lot for "growing boys", each bottle only holds 12 ounces - a mere mouthful.

Went to the "theatre" last night and saw a colour film - "Lassie come Home". You may have seen it, all about Yorkshire and a bit of Scotland and this big collie dog - of it's kind, a good show, but it got rather a mixed reception onboard.

That's just about my limit for now Mum, so till next time, cheerio and all that, and regards to the folks at home.

Your loving son,
Jim.

P.S. In case you haven't got the Allison's address it is:
"St Michaels"
Kirkbank
Burntisland
Fife – Scotland

Letter No. 16

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
11th October, 1944

Mom Dear,

Received your letter No. 15 dated 2nd Oct. this afternoon so I thought I'd get away a reply whilst the iron is hot. I'm on watch at the present, thus explaining the pencil which I seldom use for my correspondence.

I know the RAAF chap you refer to – you mean the milkman who asked you to put the money on "Geebung" for him and so earned the displeasure of "your bookmaker" when it romped home.

Sounds as if they're going ahead well with "Anzac House" – they've got the cash and with the tenants out they can go right ahead. Thanks for the accounting of my Bank Books – getting quite respectable now aren't they. Should tide me over if I'm in strife or buy a few trifles. At anyrate they say the first thousand is the hardest – wonder if I'll ever put a few together. Looks like big brother is!

Last night we had something different in the way of entertainment – a concert put on by our own lads. I wasn't in it, which is perhaps the reason why it went over so well. There is no doubt that many "who went to sneer, stayed to cheer".

The amount of work that went into it, considering it was only for 1 night, was terrific. The chippies toiled away making and erecting a solid stage on the foc'le, complete even to a small orchestra pit. The electrical branch and radio boys fixed up foot-lights, spot-lights, microphones and loudspeakers. Curtains were rigged and the signal branch donated bunting for decoration and also for costumes. Yes, we had our "girls" – and what buxom ones they were, although some really looked "glamour girls".

The compere, a Leading Seaman, wore black trousers, white mess jacket

and bow tie and it's a marvel where some of the civvie clothes came from for some of the parts.

There were a couple of serious items, one supposed to be in a chapel, dimly lit and one of the chaps singing Ave Maria. They got the effect of a stained glass window very well by painting on bunting and placing a light behind it.

One of the most applauded turns were 3 midshipmen, announced as the "Andrews Sisters". They came on dressed for the part – and started to mouth the words, whilst the loud speaker system played a record of the Andrews Sisters – the effect was very realistic and they put lots of rhythm into their dancing.

A later effort in which the Gunnery Officer raffled his "harem" was very funny, especially when one husky "maiden" was sold to the Commander and insisted on sitting on his lap and draping "her" scantily clad body round his neck. The Commander took it extra well.

After the performance, the Skipper made a short speech of thanks and the officers entertained the performers in the Ward room with a few beers. Altogether, everyone was most agreeably surprised by the excellent show.

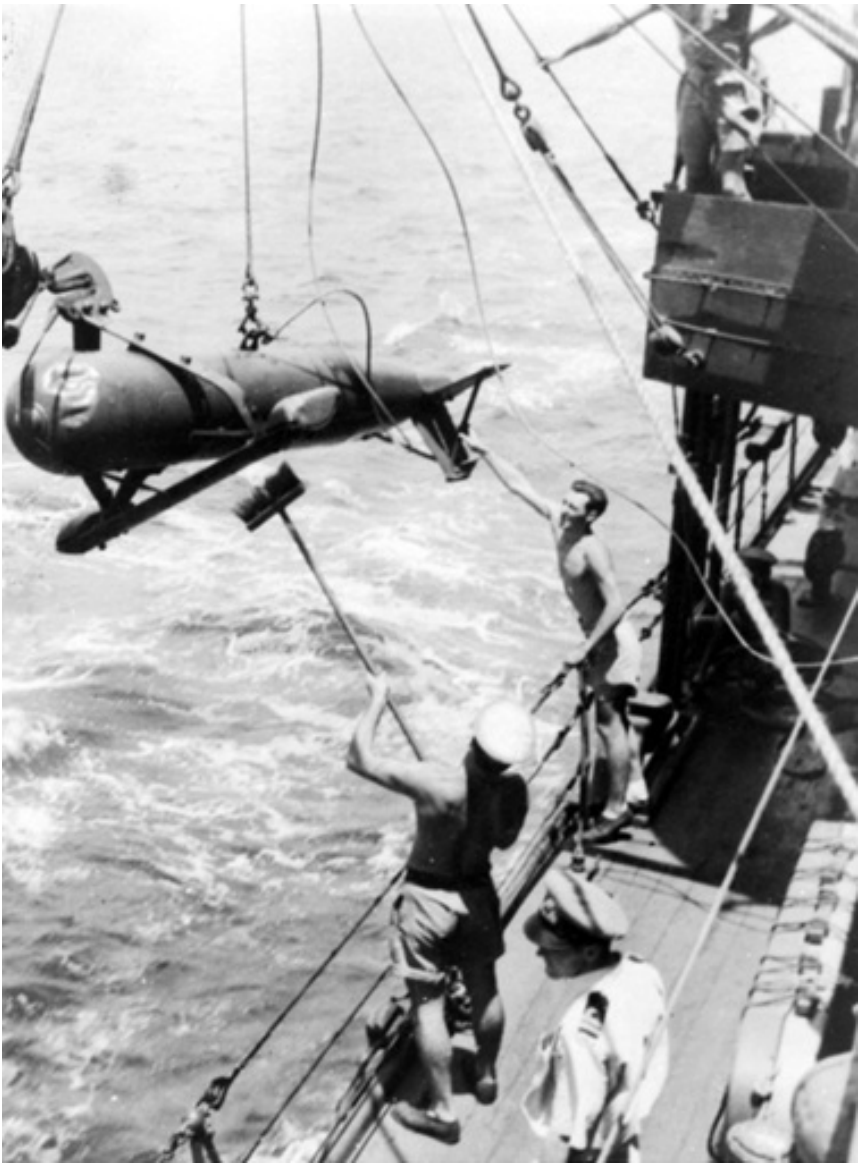
I didn't mention earlier, but we recently had a strictly Naval raffle for a diamond pendant – proceeds to go to RAN Relief Fund. Unfortunately the winner was not in this ship, but we received a special letter of thanks for our generosity. We sold over 2000 tickets at 1/- more than any other ship or Depot in the R.A.N. Our sister ship sold just 116 tickets - quite a difference!

I also received a letter from Bubs today, but won't have a chance to write to her. Please give her my apologies and I know she'll understand. Mention particularly that I like the quotation from Douglas Reid's book and especially the "tyranny of small possessions"

That's all the news for now Mum, so cheerio till next time.

Your loving son,
Jim.

Pay parade on HMAS Shropshire which is proceeding to Morotai, Sep. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017648)



A paravane being hauled aboard HMAS Shropshire after being streamed to protect the cruiser against mines, Sep. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017640)

Letter No. 17

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
Monday - 23rd October, '44

Mum,

Just a brief note to stop you from needless worry. Your youngest (and favourite) offspring is enjoying good health, apart from a slight heat rash caused by present conditions and a feeling of vast tiredness.

We've been given very short notice to get our letters ready, so I'll make this snappy and try to get one away to Bubs too. In any case, there is not much personal news this time as it's too closely mixed up with hush–hush stuff.

However, I have permission to tell you, as you probably already know, that the R.A.N. Squadron took part in the assault on the Philippines at Leyte Gulf and of course WE went in punching vigorously and doing lots of no good to things Japanese.[4]

As you can guess, we took a pretty serious view of the affair and both before and after, have not been getting the usual quota of sleep. Since it is in a good cause, I do it "more or less" cheerfully and feel proud of the distance we have

[4]After Allied forces captured Morotai Island, in the northern Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia) in September 1944, they pushed north, and on 20 October, Shropshire alongside the HMAS Australia, HMAS Arunta and HMAS Warramunga were the RAN contingent of Allied naval forces that provided a covering force for an amphibious landings on Leyte Island.

At around 6:00 on 21 October, Japanese aircraft began an attack on Allied ships in Leyte Bay. An Aichi D3A dive-bomber dove for *Shropshire* but broke away after heavy anti-aircraft fire was directed at it. The plane, damaged by Bofors fire, turned and flew at low level up the port side of the nearby *Australia*, before striking the cruiser's foremast with its wing, showering the bridge and deck with debris and burning fuel. 30 officers and sailors, including the Captain, were killed by the collision, while over 60 were wounded, resulting in *Australia* withdrawing with *Warramunga* as escort

pushed into the Japs' defences since we first opened fire on them almost a year ago.

I took advantage of a spell this morning to wash my battledress, socks etc. that were beginning to "pong" a bit after being on constantly day and night in this stinking heat. Also used the opportunity to bathe my body and shave, but feel the benefit has now been lost since I'm sweating buckets again.[5]

That's all for now Mum, but no doubt you can piece together more news from the radio and papers. Whatever you do, take NO NOTICE of Tokio Radio who have no interest at all in telling the truth and take no notice of rumours.

Remind Aunty that I'm getting closer to Perce and soon maybe we'll have him back home.

Your loving son,
Jim.

P.S. My watch-band finally fell to pieces and I used that black tape you sent me as a substitute

[5]Captain C.A.G. Nichols, commanding Shropshire, reported the ship's crew were at action stations for 146 hours out of 168, in the week ending 20 October.

Leyte Island, Philippines. A Landing Ship, Tank (LST) standing off the beach at Leyte receives a direct hit from Japanese mortar fire, Oct. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017747)

Leyte Island, Philippines. Some of the 2000 Filipino refugees who streamed into the American lines after the invasion of Leyte., Oct. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017763)

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
30th Oct. 1944

Mum,

In view of the revelations regarding your son's ship broadcast and probably printed today, I suppose that once again I must assure you that my bodywork is still intact, and that I am very well and very happy except for the fact that I am half starved, hot, sticky and weary and I wanna go home to Mother!!

By now you've probably heard and read all the stories about our famous night battle of the Surigao Strait just south of Leyte Gulf and more than likely will know more about it than I do.[6]

Somehow I don't feel in the mood to tell you of the little happenings onboard before, during and after the actions, but when I get home we'll have a

[6]On 25 October, Shropshire and Arunta formed part of a large Allied fleet comprising 6 battleships, four heavy cruisers, four light cruisers, 28 destroyers and 39 motor torpedo boats, under U.S. Seventh Fleet Rear Admiral Jesse Oldendorf. As Japanese Vice-Admiral Shoji Nishimura's Southern Force transited the narrow Surigao Strait, they were ambushed by the Allies, who executed a classic "crossing the T," positioning battleships, cruisers and destroyers across the Japanese approach while PT boats and destroyer squadrons launched torpedo attacks to harass and slow the enemy. The Japanese column suffered catastrophic losses: battleships *Fusō* and *Yamashiro* plus several destroyers and cruisers were sunk or disabled, with Shropshire firing many broadsides on the much larger battleship Yamashiro.

As Jim wrote later for the Naval Historical Society: "In this great overall sea battle of Leyte, SHROPSHIRE had become the only Australian warship ever to have fired its main gunnery at an enemy battleship and registered hits. Only one Japanese destroyer was afloat at daybreak, firing defiantly until a shell found its magazine. All told, in the sea battles of 25th October, 19 warships were sunk, mostly Japanese." The combination of torpedo strikes, aggressive destroyer attacks and concentrated shelling from the main Allied battleline shattered Nishimura's force, prevented it from reaching the Leyte landing area and helped secure the Allied amphibious operations. The Battle of Surigao Strait is remembered as the largest but also the last battleship-versus-battleship surface action in history.

nice after dinner chat when we send the children – (Merle and Cyril) to the "flix". At anyrate, I'm a bit hazy now as to what the censor will pass.

Strangely enough I didn't feel any need for "Fishers" while the battle was on, and it seemed very impersonal and I felt like a mere onlooker! Action scenes in films have stirred me more and yet this was the greatest night naval action of the war!! Our "team" (that's the way I looked at it – as a competitive game!) certainly had everything their way and it was a remarkable sight to see the white hot shells soar through the dark and a red pin-point show momentarily to register a hit on a Jap ship.

Some of their ships were afire from stem to stern and I saw one of them blow to pieces. According to all reports, our own fire was pretty accurate and we certainly did the ship we hit very little good!

You've probably seen the tally of the Jap force we sunk and we have good reason to feel proud of sharing in the destruction of 2 battleships, 4 cruisers and a number of destroyers! That's a licking the Nips won't forget in a hurry in spite of their propaganda and at last I really feel as if I've shared in something "big" and that will no doubt help to shorten this tiresome old war. After being in on an epic show like this, I shan't feel awed in the presence of any "veteran" of any force or any War. After this lot, I'll be quite satisfied to be drafted to shore – Sydney I hope! After about 3 months I'd be quite satisfied to go back to sea.

Right now, I feel tired – I don't know about sleeping standing up, but I certainly can sitting down.

Haven't done much ordinary work for quite a while and I can see a brisk time ahead when the mail catches up with us. As you can guess, it's ages since we had any personal mail. As a matter of fact we haven't even been paid our last pay – no chance to make it up.

One of the chaps sketched Col. Curtis and I at Action Stations, unbeknownst to us. I'll enclose them, even though I don't think the likeness is very good.

As I said before, don't get too hot up when you hear a few rumours. I suppose your friend at the Buffet has heard from her son on the "Australia". It

was very bad luck that her Captain and Navigator were killed and Commodore Collins injured. The Leading Writer on her, Ken Fuller, is a friend of mine who started his career at "Rushcutter" at the same time as I joined up. He was slightly burned on the arm, but don't think it would be enough to make him a hospital case. I didn't know any of the other chaps that were injured.

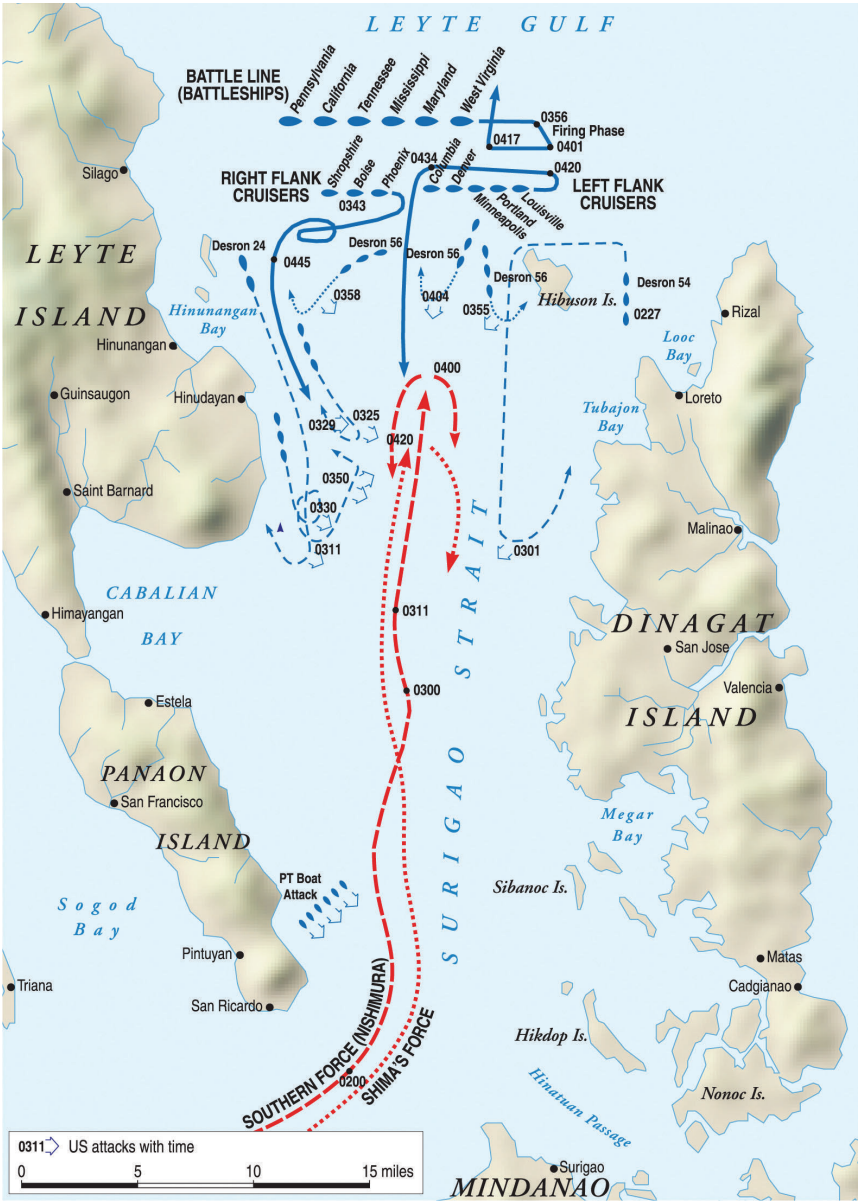
Tell Bubs I finished that story I was writing and that it ran to about 4500 words and I'm submitting it to the Dept. of Information for censoring before sending it to a magazine. I think it reads fairly well – hope to show it to you before long.

That's all for now

Love,
Jim.

Hit and aflame from defensive gunfire, a Japanese Kamikaze aircraft narrowly misses the escort aircraft carrier USS Sangamon, Oct. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 302728)

Friendly Filipinos assist American motor torpedo boats (PT Boats) in picking up survivors after Japanese warships were destroyed by Allied forces in the Battle of Surigao Strait, Oct. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 306586)



Map showing the one-day Battle of Surigao Strait, Oct. 1944. (Warfare History Network, October 2016)

Letter No. 19

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address. 5th November, 1944

Mum,

The usual duty weekly letter to give you evidence that I'm still in one piece and more or less vigorous.[7] My recent letters must seem terribly scrappy but I've got ample to fill my time and to tell the truth, I'm just about sick of letter-writing. One a week and this is "19" – disgusting isn't it?

As you'll notice, today is Guy Fawkes Day, but so far there have been no fireworks and we are doing nicely without them. Earlier in the week though we had enough "Fireworks" to last me a very long time. Still, we're still on top and that is the main thing.

Yesterday I had an experience much more terrifying than the Naval Battle I mentioned in my last letter! A piece of one of my back lower molars broke off and I was able to get an appointment with the dentist who then proceeded to drill and gouge until there was more hole than tooth as he took out an old filling too. Shows that dentists aren't infallible as you'll remember that he told me I was dentally fit about 6 weeks ago. I had thought he would have to pull the tooth, but he put in a temporary filling and is going to finish it tomorrow afternoon. Might as well get these things done now.

Talking about ordeals, I managed to get my hair cut through the week and asked for it "short". It's short alright – the real "boxer hair-cut" and I get a few digs about it, but it is cooler and that's a big consideration.

Our only recreation recently was on one afternoon this week when quite a crowd of the locals paddled out to the ship to do a little trading. Both they and

[7]On Nov 1, Shropshire narrowly evaded torpedoes fired by USS Abner Read (destroyer, off Leyte. Minutes before, the destroyer had been turned into a fireball when a Japanese kamikaze aircraft crashed into her.

the sailors had the happiest time for weeks – the sailors leaning over the side and lowering stuff on ropes and in buckets. The air was filled with a continual jabber like Paddy's Markets, but everything was very amiable. They wanted clothing and food, and exchanged for it mostly paper money (which now only has souvenir value) and a few hand woven hats and handbags etc. I lowered a pair of old white socks for a couple of currency notes which I'll keep as souvenirs. As usual the sailors didn't get the best of the bargains but got a lot of fun and didn't mind very much. I noticed that toilet soap and talcum powder had a very high purchasing power and were in great favour with the ladies in the boats. Evidently items of great rarity in this community!

As time draws on, I'm beginning to wonder if I'll have time to get my Xmas greetings over to Great Britain, but I think I'll be able to manage by sending Airgraphs.

It has occurred to me that my drivers' licence will be up for renewal by now and I hope that you attended to the item.

I finalised typing my story about this last operation and Naval Battle and a couple of officers on board who know the newspapers game reckon it's up to standard. I'm only waiting till I can get it censored by the proper authorities and I'll send it to a Sydney newspaper or magazine and would feel very pleased if I could get it published under my name. Buy up a dozen or so and send them to my pals overseas.

Routines get a bit upset lately and as a result, Communion will not be until 4.15 this afternoon and as I'm not on watch I'll try to get along.

I wrote to Pinto during the week, so you may get a call from him to find out all the latest.

Ta ta for now.

Love,
Jim.

Heavy anti-aircraft (HA) gun crew on Shropshire playing darts while standing by their gun awaiting air attacks on Morotai, Sep. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017670)

S.5294
Ldg Wtr J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
12th Nov., 1944

Mum,

Here I am, up to "No. 20" and still no mail to answer – what a wad there'll be when it does turn up! As I have the Middle Watch this morning (midnight to 4a.m.) I'll devote some time to your letter, as I think it's going to be a quiet watch. Not like earlier in the evening, when I didn't turn in as early as I should have liked.

Yesterday of course, was both Melbourne Cup and Armistice Day, but I really think that few of us remembered it was the latter; I had forgotten until someone mentioned the fact at about supper-time. Strangely enough, I heard the actual running of the Cup although I had no interest in it – not even a sweep, and only know a few of the nags. Maybe I'd have bet on the winning jockey if I'd known! I was on watch in the afternoon and somehow a "Sparker" picked up the broadcast and put it over a group of speakers that are normally used to advise control positions, guns and look-outs of aircraft movements. It was certainly a change to hear a race broadcast on it. Plenty of static, but we could follow it okay.

Remember I mentioned a visit to our "Fang Bos'n" (Dentist) in my last letter – saw him during the week and had a very large filling stacked in the offending tooth. He gave me "curry" for a while, but I think it's settled down now and I'll just have to see him to get the rough edges polished off.

Things are getting bad when a ship begins to run out of soap! We can only buy Wrights' Coal Tar Soap at the canteen now – 11d per cake and do you think that hurts my Scottish principles. I can't see 11d worth in any soap, especially as I don't even like it as well as Protex or Palmolive which sell at less than half the price. I'll tell you also what my first purchase of this darned Wrights' soap

did to me: To supplement our daily menus, I opened the tin of cheese Bub sent me and used it at supper one night. Next morning when I tasted it, I was getting a mighty soapy taste and so had to heave an almost full tin away and did that hurt! Next time we go alongside another ship I'll have to try to bargain for some cakes of "Lux" or something.

I realized during the week that once again I'd forgotten the October birthdays of 4 of my nephews, but I hope they forgive me. At odd times last week I scrawled off airgraphs as Xmas greetings to my overseas friends including the Stanghans, Allisons and "Dean" and hope they arrive in good time. Wish I knew George McGrath's present address – probably in England now – I'd send him one!

My recreations have altered somewhat of recent days – haven't had the opportunity for playing chess, the piano or doing any P.T. except sometimes pacing up and down on the foc'le.[8] As I've been "dressed up" for the last few weeks my body has lost all that "Bondi tan" but I suppose I can spare it. I've read a few books, interesting to me, but perhaps not your type. Getting up to date and also getting a few close-ups on various aspects of the War – like "They were expendable", "Malta Spitfire", "Flying Tigers", "30 seconds over Tokio", "Two Survived", "Year of the Wild Boar" (about Japanese life) – all true and carrying a lot of interest to me. Can't be many of them left in the library now, so I'll have to go back to fiction – get back on the Murders etc. Tried reading Wodehouse the other day, but I've passed that stage now I'm afraid – or perhaps it's because I've probably already read all his books.

There is a buzz that we might sight some mail today – came through since I began writing, so I'll leave this letter open for 24 hours.

4a.m. 13th Nov. – For once, a buzz has proved right – that mail did arrive. Another ship brought it to us, and it was transferred by crane as we steamed along side by side. It's hard to say whether the letters or the bags of parcels were the most appreciated! But what a wonderful lift to morale – I even feel compensated for the extra work I'll be wading into today and for at least a week following!![9]

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[8]On Nov 6, Shropshire had another near miss when HMAS Gascoyne, (frigate) shot down a Japanese kamikaze aircraft aimed at Shropshire in Lingayen Gulf.

[9]Jim is not exaggerating the excitement generated by the arrival of the mail. HMAS War-

There were 2 parcels for me, one from Bubs and the other – a "Goodlands" parcel from "employees of Aust. Dry batteries". I suppose the latter would be sent at the instigation of Mr. Marris. Surely it isn't the work of Goody's mother!! Anyway, it is most appreciated – especially a cake of "Protex" which normally I'd say was a waste of space. I nearly hit the deck-head when I opened Bub's parcel – apples in it – blimey, I thought "d'affaire de lemons" would be a lesson. These apples were quite a mess – these climates don't allow for passage of perishables! Nevertheless the rest of the parcel comes at the right time. No sight of the parcel containing jam that you sent!

Received 3 letters from you, plus the note in Bubs letter and did that leave me breathless! This idea of Perce's seems to have everything I've been looking for, - money without work by making money work – and I certainly want you to go ahead and draw the cash from our Joint A/c and put it into Perce's scheme without delay – only hope you've anticipated my permission. You're a great Mother to let me have the interest of your £200 share in it too – thanks a lot Mum! By the way, I didn't quite understand whether you meant 20% interest per annum or per quarter – I'm still in favour though, whichever it is and tell Perce I'll put in another £200 if he'll take it, just as soon as I can get down home and sign the cheques etc. As you may guess I've no chance to cable consent as you suggested.

I've got 3 of your letters here, so I'll answer them now. No. 16 of 9 Oct '44 – As you had just received my No. 14, the mail service must have been good at the time. Seems funny to think of Mr. Marris back at the Park taking an interest in cricket again – like old times. I think they'll like this nephew of theirs Harry – I liked what I saw of him in England. Very tall chap, but not very strong I believe. Think he was discharged from Army after Dunkirk – what is he in now? I sent an Airgraph to Mrs. Cubbin and Arline for Xmas.

See that Vic Jackson has a son – he's touring up Northern areas with a cricket team now. Wonder why he didn't join up anything?

By the way, Col Curtis is pleased, letter from his wife that she's out of the WRAN's.

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ramunga carrying mail from Australia to RAN ships in the Philippines, signalled HMAS Shropshire:–"Intend to visit you first". Shropshire replied:–"Shall open fire if you don't".

Our tenants don't seem to be in very good health – all of them ailing!

Young Ron Hadley seems to be having fun with his chickens – £400 in the bank at his age.

No. 17 of 17th Oct. - Heard all about Bub's packing etc in her letters, but received yours first, so it was my first indication that they had gone. Hope my letters are re-addressed to them! Did Geoff Bush and family move in at Burwood? As you say, a trip to Orange might be in order next leave. I suppose Tom is as happy as a lark to be back at his old haunts – he can have them! Peter hasn't returned to ship yet and do you think we'll ever let him forget that he missed the "big show".

Rather tickled to think that Bet Tait went off – I'd just like a peek at her and the gink she married. Haven't seen her in about 10 years.

No. 18 of 23rd Oct. – Notice that you don't mention hearing that we were in the Philippines show, but as Bub mentions it in her enclosed letter, I guess you knew and hope you weren't too worried. I guess you renewed my driver's licence for me, for which I thank you dear lady. I hope I get a chance to use it next time down. I can see that with Bubs away now, you'll have to make a carbon copy of my letters containing home news and send to her. Had to laugh at Bubs describing the moving on at Orange – Lofty sending policemen and prisoners down to lend a hand with the cleaning and shifting! Had a letter from Merle in this mail tell her, but she can share the parts of your letters that you wish her to know. Only other letter was from the gal at Bellevue Hill – a beaut too – about 10 pages!!

No more paper so I'll finish now.

Lots of love Mum and above all – don't worry.

Your affec. son,
Jim.

A Fairmile submarine chaser at a forward base comes alongside Shropshire with official mail, Sep. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017644)

Letter No. 21

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
20th November, 1944

Mom Dear,

Once again I'll use any Middle Watch, which I expect will be a quiet one, to catch up on correspondence. The arrival of a second mail within less than a week of the previous one has made us feel that we're not forgotten men and has made everyone appreciably happier. My "bag" was not a bad effort and included 2 from you, 2 from Bubs, 1 from Mrs. Marris at Katoomba and 1 from Rene Clayton in reply to my letter. There were also a number of papers from you and a couple of English ones from Mrs. Marris. Your letters were Numbers 19 and 20, of 31/10 and 5/11.

As you say, it was understandable that my letters for a time weren't coming through regularly, but I kept up the 1 per week and trust that you are quite re-assured now that I really am okay!

You gave some space to describing the picture "Madame Curie" in your letter, but evidently for once, I saw it before you did. I thought I mentioned it in a previous letter about 3 months ago.

Jean Earngay's electric apparatus you describe must be either infra red or ultra violet rays, but I should think it would be beneficial for you and Merle if used properly.

Looks as if we will have opposition from the Pommies instead of the Yanks next time we're down, and I believe they get quite a decent rate of pay now and more than our own Servicemen. Our soldiers are not exactly overpaid for the type of "work" they do are they? Maybe they should refuse to strike (the Japs) until they get a rise. I guess that just isn't done though – a privilege reserved for the poor underpaid dockees, wharfees and miners etc. Anzac Buffet will

be a big rambling eye-sore if they keep making extensions to it. When will our Anzac House be ready?

Haven't received the parcel you sent yet, but maybe it will turn up in a few days time. In the meantime, the ones I received from Bubs and Mrs. Marris help a lot. I was about to make some coffee yesterday, as Bubs sent me along a tin of Bushells; had the milk, sugar and billy-can all arranged and then the "coffee-tin" proved to be full of peanuts. Got me in bad with the chaps I'd promised coffee to. That doesn't mean I want any sent though – just had a yearning for it and thought I had some coffee at hand.

Ross seems to be doing very nicely for leave and I don't think his present location is too bad as war jobs go. He certainly can't be considered to be in the danger zone now at anyrate. Found out that one of the chaps onboard – now a Supply P.O. – (named "Worrall – no relation to Bronte family) – was the other Supply Assistant on the "Vendetta" with Ross and he stayed behind in Singapore while Ross came home with the earlier batch.

Apparently the Lodge is on the job checking up on me, and I'll hope to settle my entry next time down. Has Percy gone through with his entry yet?

What's the attraction in Orange to Bobbie Y – she seems to go up there often enough!

I can see the P.A. Yeomans family having their hands full when this wallaby matures a bit – blessed if I can see where there's room for him at Percy's!

As you say, there have certainly been some startling headlines about the R.A.N. in the papers as a result of this last show. I've seen cuttings that have been sent up and it does annoy me to see how highly coloured the reports are, tending to worry you home-folk unnecessarily. They weren't written by eye-witnesses either as the papers seem to indicate and the accounts are nearly all second-hand and could be toned down a bit to give the true picture.

Things are much quieter now and we are back in the old rig of shorts and sandals. It's much more comfortable than the old battledress and at first looked very strange and everyone looked half naked after all the time fully dressed in long trousers and long sleeved shirts etc.

An unprecedented happening occurred yesterday, when there was an issue of beer (for the usual fee) before lunch. It's the first time I've heard of beer being doled out at sea, but perhaps the powers-that-be decided we deserved a drink stronger than tea. For the first time too, the beer was really cold – just out of the frig. So I guess the frig. was empty or the beer wouldn't have been stacked there. At anyrate, even if it was only Yank beer, it was nice and cold, and went down well before dinner – the familiar "bully beef".

Just in case anything happened to the letter I wrote last week, I'll repeat that I'm in favour of putting the money in Percy's scheme and I want you to draw out the necessary amount from our joint account for that purpose. Let me know a bit more about it if it's a matter that can be written about quite safely. Also whether the 20% is per annum or per quarter!

Young Peter L. hasn't arrived onboard yet, but mail is arriving for him, so I suppose he's not very far away. I'm curious to see how badly his face is scarred.

The Naval issue of the "W.W." turned up and I think every bloke onboard got at least one. It's got its interesting points but on the whole is pretty "corny" with its hurray for the red, white and blue. They forget pretty easily don't they? Everyone adversely criticizes "Virgils" sketches of some of the officers onboard – quite impossible to find even a near likeness in most of them.

That just about exhausts my effort now Mother, so I'll bid you a very early good-morning and ta ta till next issue.

Your loving son,
Jim.

Signalmen on Shropshire enjoy their morning "cuppa", Sep. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017638)

Three members of the crew on HMAS Shropshire who are doing correspondence courses in Agricultural Science and Commercial Art are seen studying at their action stations using a blackboard on which is drawn a cow, Sep. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017645)

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
27th November, 1944

Mom Dear,

I held this letter over one day for a couple of reasons – I thought perhaps we might have another mail today with a letter from you; there was a good new picture on last night – one not yet released in Sydney I believe; and I was away from the ship nearly all day yesterday having a most enjoyable time, so put off the letter effort till today.

However, I have one letter from you to answer – No. 22 dated 15th Nov. which arrived during last week. I note that you have received my letter written after the Battle of Surigao Strait and am relieved to know that you must have felt much less anxious after getting it. Considering everything it didn't take terribly long to get down to you. I hardly think you'll see a film of that action as it took place at night, but there'll probably be a few shots taken on invasion day.

Too bad I didn't get a placed horse in the Cup, but am glad that the Smallcombe family collected as that would make them most happy. I suppose young Allan was cut up about his little wallaby dying, but that was probably the best thing to happen! Allan was quite right about an old Scot's boy, Ron Smith, being Captain's Sec. and as such was my boss, but he has now gone South for treatment of a skin infection he managed to pick up. The Caps. Sec. before him, Pay. Lieut. Griffiths who was my boss for quite a while has also left the ship on draft to Melbourne. And so the old hands are thinning out. One of the old originals has come back though — young Peter T. I haven't had more than a couple of minutes conversation with him, but I think he made things a bit hot for himself in Sydney and they sent him back to get rid of him — his face is certainly no pretty picture now, as there is a thin scar line running from

level his eye to his chin — quite a mark. No difficulty now in telling him from Paul.

You may remember me mentioning in previous letters about a story I'd written about the last operation and at last I've sent it on its way. The title by the way is "Comes the Invasion". As it had to be sent with a covering letter from the Captain to Naval Intelligence to be specially censored before submitting for publication, the Captain had to wade through my "master-piece" and afterwards he sent for me, and complimented me on my work and only asked me to make two minor changes to completely satisfy him and then it went on its way. In the covering letter I requested that the story be forwarded direct to Percy after they okay it, and I've written to Perce asking him to do me the favour of taking it personally to a couple of Sydney papers and magazines to see if they can use it. He may be a trifle annoyed for me to take up his valuable time, but I think he is the best person to act on my behalf and much better than me sending it per post. He'll probably show it to you before he takes it to the papers, but there is no knowing just how soon it will emerge from the Naval "red tape".

Last night, I felt in a better mood than I have for a long time. I could even laugh at the supper; this being a Govt. concern, everything must look right on the face, so we even have menus made out a week in advance to show what is on for each meal. Of course they are subject to alteration without notice and also there is no telling just from the menu what will eventually result. Take last night — menu said "Cold meat and salad" — we got "2 slices of Devon sausage and $\frac{1}{2}$ a gherkin"; some salad! I promptly placed the meal between two slices of bread and made tracks for the coolness of the upper deck with my supper in one hand and cup of tea in the other. However, as I said, I felt so well I could even laugh at that.

Just before church yesterday morning, I received an invite to go rowing in the ship's whaler, and we left soon after the special Thanksgiving Service. The sun was hot, but we felt so free at getting away from the ship that we didn't mind overmuch. There was quite a team of us, and we had plenty of reliefs for the oars and changed frequently. I got the exercise at the expense of only one tiny blister. We certainly had a representative gathering in the boat — 1 Chief Petty Officer, 1 Chief Writer, 2 Petty Officers, 1 Leading Telegraphist, 1 Leading Writer, 1 Leading Supply Assistant, 1 Able Seaman, 1 Telegraphist, 2 Writers and

2 Cooks — a pretty motley crew eh, but we had a very enjoyable day. We rowed ashore to a tiny patch of beach and after taking our gear out of it, anchored the boat a little way out. After a swim we cleaned all the boat equipment and the boat itself with sand and water, and I suppose that was the primary purpose for our jaunt, although I hadn't realised that before we started. We soon got a little fire going and produced a good brew of tea, but unfortunately there was only enough sugar for one cup each. We also had the necessary bread and butter, pork from the ship's dinner menu, some baked spuds and tins of fruit from different blokes parcels. A very nice repast, topped up with a tummy-ful of coconut juice. At different times, waves encroached right into our picnic area and finished up damping everything but our high spirits. I'd tried staying in the shade, but still got burnt. To protect myself whilst in the water, I wore a floppy blue hat someone had brought and must have looked quite a sight. I wore only vees the whole time we were away, but most of the others wore even less — not that it matters round these parts, but they did get burnt a bit on a part I didn't, with the result that I can still sit down to type. Col Curtis was with us, and he didn't mind the sun — he's almost like a nigger now. A sudden tropical storm blew up at one stage, so we all dashed in for a swim and as a result of recent operations, we started swimming in formation and did evolutions like a battle fleet. You can imagine just how orthodox we were in our manoeuvring though, especially when the "admiral" tells the whole fleet to submerge. Not until late in the afternoon did we get back to the ship, and just to make our coming alongside look very impressive and dignified, one of the cooks managed to fall overboard at the last moment, thus earning us many raspberries from the spectators on deck. After a hot wash, I really felt a friend of the world. A nice days exercise and some sun help a lot.

To complete things, we had quite a good picture last night — Larraine Day in "Bride by Mistake" — believe it has not yet been to Sydney and it proved quite an amusing show. We've had a couple of good ones through the week, including Walt Disney's "Saludos Amigos" and Ginge Rogers in "Once Upon a Honeymoon".

As yet, I haven't sighted the last parcel you mention, but trust that it will turn up okay. Papers seem to be coming in their usual way — all at once, and then a break for several weeks.

To try to help out the footwear problem, I dismembered two pairs of old

sandals that were gone beyond hope and managed to make something out of the best parts of each.

Just checking up on the date, I realized that just two years ago today, I was very happy to set my feet firmly on the (more or less) dry shore of old England. By gee, it seems like every bit of those two years ago too. It now seems hard to believe that I once used to worry about whether I would ever go to sea at all, but I've certainly got a large dose of it since then, haven't I. Still, I wouldn't have it any other way, if I had the chance again, although it would be nicer to serve it somewhere near a civilized part, even if it wasn't near home. By the time my draft comes, I think I'll be ready to retire gracefully, and perhaps gratefully, to a shore existence!

Cheerio for now Mother, and my salutations to all those who wish to have them.

As ever, your loving son,
Jim.

Letter No. 22a

S.5294
Ldg. Wtr. J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
30th Nov., '44

Mom Dear,

Just a little note to cover a copy of the "Thanksgiving Service" held onboard last Sunday. I managed to get a copy and thought you would like to see it.

Also, just a reminder that I sent you a little parcel the other day, so keep a look out for it and let me know whether it arrives safely and the contents turn out satisfactorily.

From little things I've heard recently, I think the Lodge must be enquiring of "hon. Members" onboard what sort of guy they think I am. They certainly seem to be thorough, but I wonder just how long before I'll get the opportunity to be presented. You have never mentioned whether Percy had joined as yet!

Cheerio for now Mum – still well and moderately happy! So don't fret about me.

Your loving son,
Jim.

Gunner Robert Darlington of Armadale, Vic, winning the quoits championship held on the fore-gun deck of Shropshire, Sep. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017645)

Letter No. 23

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same address.
3rd December, 1944

Mom Dear,

It's very nice to be able to answer another of your letters, and No. 23 dated 23rd Nov., arrived yesterday. I was interested to see the paper photo of Ken Fuller and his baby, but 'fraid I don't know the Bronte RAAF chap whose photo you also enclosed.

It's just as well that you sent my Xmas parcel off, because it looks very much as if this will be yet another Xmas (the 4th) away from you, and it is nice to at least have some nice food to remind one of that festive season. Just in case you have cause to send me another parcel, I'd like you to make an effort to send jam, properly soldered in tins, and such sweet things provided you are sure they will keep, rather than Marmite etc. because I have plenty still and somehow just don't seem to fancy it much. I'm definitely against all those pastes — turkey & ham, fish pastes etc. Beggars shouldn't be choosers, but I still have a few fads.

Had to chuckle at your descriptions of Nev & Allan's doings — brings back memories of myself when I was that age — doesn't seem very long ago when I first started going to dances with "Dolly" Dalton, Pinto, Eddie Hollis and that crowd does it? Seems that Nev has made a hit with a few of the lasses – my, my – as Mrs. Goodwin once said to Jean E., it makes one feel quite old. I can just imagine Nev being intolerant of Al because he had no sense of rhythm. Wonder if Nev can jitter-bug yet – I hardly think he would be the type do you – I'd like to see him in action at a dance some night. Young Allan seems to be doing well at school, but I always credited him with a pretty sharp intellect, and it seems that he is following in the footsteps of his Uncle as regards Latin – I don't think I ever passed an exam in that ridiculous subject.

I can't quite imagine la Cubitt as a land girl, and I bet the early rising shook

her at first. Looks as if she is out to learn something about the geography of the world without travelling doesn't it — first the Yanks and now the "Kippers". I suppose she'll finish up marrying some poor innocent Aussie though! By the way, give my best to young Mrs. Morris if you should see her, and thank her for the gossip.

For the past week, we have been having quite a soft time, and I managed to get ashore for a swim one afternoon through the week. The pictures onboard of late have been very good too, and we've had some good, newish shows. Shows this week have included Mickey Rooney in the "Human Comedy" (which we didn't take very kindly to), Judy & Mickey in "Girl Crazy" and last night Rita Hayworth in "Cover Girl". There have also been a couple of bands come over from other ships in company to entertain us, and we are reciprocating by sending our concert party to some of the other ships.

You'll probably think that we are having one long round of picnics lately, but believe it or not, I was off the ship again all day today. This time however, it was an organized picnic with the idea of getting everybody off the ship just for a change of atmosphere. Yesterday half the ship's company went off and had a very good day in spite of the fact that it rained quite a bit during the afternoon. We thought that our picnic today might be cancelled on account of the way it rained this morning, but soon after breakfast it began to break up, and it was decided to go on with it. The idea was to get everybody away from the routine of ship life for a day, and taking the matter psychologically so that the lazy ones wouldn't stay onboard just because of the lack of effort, it was worked that those who underlinedidn't want to go had to hand their names in, and so the lazy ones took the easier course and went. It was rather like a Sunday school picnic as far as the atmosphere went, only in place of raspberry syrup we had icy cold canned beer.

We crowded off the ship fairly early this morning into a landing craft, and at the time it was still raining. However, just as soon as we shoved off the rain stopped and the weather began to clear up properly. The place we went to was quite a good distance from the ship, easily as far as from the Quay to Manly and to make it more like that ferry trip, we had the band with us and they played several times on the way over. As soon as we had made our way ashore to our central base, I stripped off and went in for a swim and as usual found the water beautiful and very clear. The place we went to is a well organized recreation

place with facilities for all sorts of games for the entertainment of the sailors. Apart from the swimming, there are concrete tennis courts, basket ball courts, hand-ball courts and baseball fields. There is a place there to provide sports equipment and the lads soon had a couple of footballs in action. We had also brought along a couple of sets of cricket gear with us, and pitches were set up on some hard ground.

After coming out of the water in the morning, I joined the happy throng getting their ration of two cans of icy cold beer, jabbed two holes in one and the beer in it didn't touch the sides of my throat. It was rather gassy beer, and I saw hundreds of fellows get a real beer bath when an opened can sprayed beer all over the shop. I managed to "force" my second can of beer down to join the first one, and then Peter Tonkin and I drew a couple of leather gloves and a rubber ball from the sports depot and went along to play at the hand-ball courts. I used to play a bit of hand-ball in the Army and the rules are the same as for squash racquets. We had a very good game, but it was a bit hard on my soft hands. By the way, I won the game 21 to 12, after Peter had led me 8 to 1 in the early stages; quite a good recovery, eh! We had played this game in the broiling sun and were very, very hot, so put the gear back and dashed in for another swim and a throw around with the water-polo ball. After that I went along and had a nice fresh water shower and soaped with Lux kindly lent by a "gob" and felt pretty good when I saw the lunch line had formed up. Lunch was 2 beef sandwiches, some tinned apricots and a cup of tea — quite sufficient for me.

I then went along to try my hand at the cricket, and after a few bowls managed to knock over the wicket and thus got myself a go with the bat. Not long afterwards, another beer issue came along, just as icy as the first as just as much appreciated. I went back to the cricket, but in bowling barefoot, managed to rip my foot, so toddled down to the first aid post to have it attended to. I found a couple of very decent Yanks there, and nattered to them for about half an hour about this and that, managing to rib one of them quite a bit, because I told him what I thought of his home state Pennsylvania. I said that half of it was very nice, but that Pittsburgh and Harrisburg were the dirtiest places under the sun. He came from Harrisburg, and we had quite a good-natured argument. They also asked me for the low-down on this here ball game we play — "cricket". They thought we were pretty much iron men, because in cricket the men field with bare hands, whereas in baseball they have very thick large gloves. I also gave them the brief rules of the game, and told them about Test Matches etc.

and they were very interested. My active part of the day was over because of my foot, but time was nearly up, so I wandered down to where our boat was waiting. The boys were in rare good humour, and we took a very affectionate farewell of the Yank sailors who were there waiting for their boats to pick them up. Many of our lads traded their caps with them, and they were keen to get some Aussie money, as many of them have never been to Australia (thank goodness!)

The band played again on the way back, and some of the boys began an impromptu dance after the playing of "Boompa-A-Daisy", and continued on with a little jitterbuggin. Along came the rain again then, but we'd had our day in the sun and nobody minded very much. While the band was playing, someone had started a shower of coins going, and this was put aside to be added to the votes for "Miss Shropshire". At ld. a vote, I think they collected about a thousand votes just on the way back in the barge. I'll explain this "Miss Shropshire" business. It appears that CUSA are shifting their Navy Canteen and Rec. Room to bigger quarters, and to help raise money, have started a Warships Queen competition.[10] The first we heard of this was when a list came onboard, and it showed that Miss Hobart was leading with about 18000 votes (I think) whilst poor Miss "S" was last with a paltry 4,000. Immediately the boys decided that this wouldn't do at all, and although we don't even know what our "Miss" looks like, or what her name is, over 25,000 votes were collected in 48 hours, and today's outing, yielded another 1,000 odd, so I think that when our cheque goes in, Miss "S" will soar somewhat. You might have a look to see if it is mentioned in the papers — closing date is 13th December I think. There's no doubt about it — sailors are a queer lot. Who said sailors don't care!

Well Mamma, you might think that is all the news, but there is one more little item. Tomorrow morning, I go back into Ship's Office once again. However I've had a good spell in Captain's Office — about 8 months I think, and know how to run it now if I should fall for the job somewhere else. In a way I'm a bit sorry to leave, because the work here is the more interesting, but it doesn't really make much difference to me. The only think is that I walk slapbang into the quarterly closing of the ledgers. In a way though, being back on

[10]CUSA refers to "Catholic United Services Auxiliary" which was raising funds towards a mobile canteen, to provide hot meals for men and women of the Forces as well as civilians, in a national emergency.

the ledgers will be better from point of view of civvie work. I'll let you know in next week's edition how I make out — should be alright as there is a different and much better boss than the one who was in Ship's Office when I was there before. Anyway, they say a change is as good as a holiday don't they — well, look out Xmas Leave (in Ship's Office) — here I come. Ta ta for now Mum, and give my best to Merle, Aunty and the other folks.

Your loving son,
Jim.

P.S. What is the strength of what Merle said in a letter to me – something about them moving in January. Where to and why etc??? If so, I can tell the Skipper that he can take the ship home then!!

Letter No. 24

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same Address.
10th Dec., 1944

Mom Dear,

I consider myself very fortunate in that I have two letters of yours to answer – No. 24 dated 30th Nov. arrived during the week and No. 25 dated 4th Dec. & finished on the 5th arrived yesterday – pretty fast work and it certainly makes home seem closer to be able to get mail as quickly as that. The position with 2nd Class mail is not quite as good, because I haven't had any papers for about 3 weeks, and they usually come in a great batch. Your parcel containing tinned fruit, jam, jellies, peanut butter and "Dad's Cookies" also arrived yesterday and I was very pleased to welcome it. As a matter of fact, finding mail and the parcel onboard last night after yet another day ashore cheered me considerably at a time when my mood was inclined to be a bit "sour"; I'll tell you more about that later on.

I'm sure you must have been glad to hear 1st hand news of me from Ron Smith and it was very decent of him to remember to phone you as I asked. It shook me a bit to learn that the "Aust. Dry Batteries" parcel was not from the Marrises and I'll have to acknowledge it suitably to Mrs. G. I suppose. I'm pretty shameless I guess, but I don't really mind who sends me parcels and I welcome them all.

The way you explain the investment with Percy is not very clear I'm afraid, so I'll have to either wait until I get home to find out clearly what goes on, unless perchance Perce should write himself. However, I'm satisfied to learn that the matter is under control and I think it will be to my great benefit financially. If at all possible though, I should like to know, just how much I get out of it in L.S.D. annually. Not that I'm exactly money mad or anything, it's just that I take an interest in what goes on in my affairs and like to know how I stand at present or in the future when the scheme bears fruit. Hope that Percy is still

keeping me in mind for that job in spite of his Qualified Accountant – you might remember that I am also a "qualified Accountant" and I hope to bring myself up to date on Cost Accounting if I get drafted to a Sydney Depot in the near future. Back to night school – wouldn't it?[11]

As I haven't kept up to date regarding Geoff Bush's private life in the last couple of years, I don't know whether you mean he has been sent North on his job, or whether he is in the Army. I had an idea that he was out of the Army but maybe I'm wrong.

Ross Ryan is on a pretty good wicket at the place he is now I should think and I can't blame him for being quite happy there. I'm curious to know why he whizzed down to Melbourne when he was down on leave though – what's the attraction there?

I notice that you went to see "Stage Door Canteen" with Jean Earngey; we had our second attempt at it onboard the other night. The first time they showed it, the machine broke down just after Gracie Fields sang her first song – don't blame it really, I feel the same way about her. The boys on here didn't like the picture very much at all, mostly because of the stupid way the Australian and English servicemen in it were supposed to act and talk – it was a disgrace wasn't it. Pity they hadn't tried to get a couple of real Aussies in it!

Poor Uncle Bill couldn't have been too happy after his defeat for Councilor or whatever it was at Castle Hill and so he wants to move now. Where does he think he will go this time; perhaps Ron won't take too kindly to being parted from his "chicken trade". Strange to hear that Tom was again elected at Vaucluse in spite of not being there; perhaps nobody else wants the job, but I'll bet he's bucked about it. I'll bet he'll be Mayor in a couple of years and then won't Bobbie be happy.

Bubs told me in her letters that she was going down for a visit, so your news was no surprise. Where the devil are you going to put her and Don as well as the Smallcombe family.

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[11]Percy did keep Jim in mind for the position of accountant, and once Jim had returned from the RAN, he settled into the role with his older brother. Percy had established himself as an earth moving contractor in the early pre-war years. This business grew, and his company, P. A. Yeomans Pty Ltd became one of the major earth moving contractors supplying open cut coal to the wartime Joint Coal Board.

I'm glad that at last you finished that film that was in my camera, and as it has been there so long, I thought it might feel the effects of it's age and be a bit "stale", as weather and other things affect it. I hope Jean can handle it okay, and I'd like to know how they turned out, and if there were any "dud ones" amongst those I took. There are also a couple of me on the spool, and as I've promised a photo to the South African lass I'd like to know how they turned out.

What's this about Cyril being a "fire-man" at the C'reagh St. Fire Station. Do you mean a RAAF fireman, and if so will that be a temporary or permanent state of affairs, or has he got out of the RAAF. I still can't imagine him in that capacity!

You may have noticed the difference in the "type" used in this letter, as I am utilising the Ship's Office "typer" and it's not as good as the one in Captain's Office. I've been back in Ship's Office a week now, and like it alright as the company there is better than in the "old days". There is plenty of work to do though, because of the quarter closing, but I don't mind that too much. I'm not distracted from work very much by wanting to go up on deck, because although we still only wear shorts & bare chests, the climate is similar to that experienced in England by reason of the perpetual grey skies. That may seem strange but we haven't seen the sun much at all for the past couple of weeks. In a way it is good because it makes life more bearable, but sleeping on the upper deck has become hazardous again and there has been scarcely a night that I haven't had to beat a retreat below decks when the "Rains Came".

Another all day picnic for the ship's company was organised (or maybe "disorganised" would be more apt) yesterday. Unfortunately it didn't pan out a quarter as well as the one I was so pleased about last Sunday. Firstly the weather wasn't picnic standard and we had very little sun and quite a quantity of rain. There was much mucking about in the preliminary stages and as our landing craft had to call at other ships to pick up men, it was $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours after falling in for "Liberty" that we got to the Recreation Grounds – that didn't please us too well. As soon as I could I stripped off and had my first swim and followed that up with a game of cricket. By taking a couple of wickets, I managed to get two innings and as there were 4 balls being used, the batsman has a hot time. I scared the merry devil out of some of the Yanks who were watching from the leg side by twice belting fast balls amongst them. One of them got it fair on the shin and went down like a pole-axed bullock and I don't think he'll hold a very

good view of our cricket from now onward.

Following the cricket, I had another dip, and then lunch of "Devon" sandwiches and tinned fruit. Beer came on right after-wards and I purchased two small bottles and managed to force them down. I found young Peter T. and took him down to the hand-ball court to give him a chance for revenge after last week. This time he led me 6 to nil in the early stages, but once again I got my eye in and finished up beating him 21 to 18, a closer game than last week and quite enjoyable. We went in for another swim after that, and were dragged out at 2.20 p.m. to dry and dress so as to get down to the ramp to meet our boat at the appointed time of 3 p.m. As it was after 5 p.m. when the boat did arrive, you can understand why we were inclined to be a little fed up. However, finding the mail onboard made me feel much better.

By the time this gets to you, the 25th will be close at hand, so Merry Xmas Mother & a Happy New Year together.

Your loving son,
Jim.

P.S. I'd like you to send a Xmas card to Mrs. Tracy for me - the address is 402 New St, Elsternwick - VIC

Letter No. 25

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same Address.
17th Dec., 1944

Mom Dear,

I've just had Xmas Day! Surprising isn't it, considering the date, but for all purposes onboard, today was OUR Xmas and we regarded it accordingly. This was brought about mainly, through the arrival of our turkeys and A.C.F. parcels etc. and it was decided to pass them on to us straight away, together with the vegetables etc. freshly on the ship, rather than take up valuable storage space until the correct Xmas, and perhaps find then that we have to be on the job and that it may not be practicable to relax for the day and be a little festive. Therefore, we had it today and this is how it went.

We were awakened this morning half an hour after the usual time by the usual pipe – "wakey, wakey" followed by the Officer of the Watch speaking over the broadcasting system and bidding us "Merry Xmas" and apologising for not being able to bring us all a cup of tea.

After my morning wash and breakfast, I did a bit of work in the office, and then dressed in full tropical rig – i.e. shirt, socks and shoes, as well as shorts – and took my place in the Sunday morning Divisions, which is more or less an inspection of the ship's company by the Captain. Xmas church service with Carol singing etc. was held in the Torpedo Space, and it did really look quite changed by the addition of greenery and palm fronds brought from the shore. Reminded me a little of Palm Sunday at home. After church was finished, the fun for the day started! Officers began dressing in the sailors rigs and carrying out the rating's jobs. On the Quarterdeck, the Quartermaster (who is a Leading Seaman) took over as Officer of the Watch, and the O.O.W. took the Q.M.'s job. The Midshipmen and Sub. Lieuts. took over from the quarterdeck staff and did the jobs of the bosun's mates and sideboys etc.

Father Christmas (the Gunnery Officer) shook hands and handed out the A.C.F. parcels to every man onboard, and it was hard to realise the number onboard until seeing them stretched in single file all around the upper deck of the ship. All this time, bogus orders and instructions were coming over the loudspeakers, such as "Prepare to repel enemy aircraft with empty bottles"; "Crown and Anchor is now being played in the Captain's Cabin!" etc. We were ordered to break all our usually strict traffic regulations regarding One Way Traffics and Up and Down ladders etc. under the penalty of being "run in".

I joined the line up for dinner after consuming my "K.B." and found that the Cafeteria had also been tastefully decorated with bunting, greenery and palms. The Officers had taken over the serving of the food and were having a whale of a time and getting tons of abuse from all and sundry. There were also officers in the scullery doing the washing up, and a few others dressed as delectable maidens showing us to our seats. Every now and then a roar would go up from the mob as some fresh funny incident occurred. Apart from the frivolity, the food was excellent and I'll enclose a copy of the menu.

The Canteen manager, much to our surprise I must admit, "let his head go" and presented all buyers at the canteen with a cigar. Never have I seen so many sailors smoking the big cigars! The next highlight was a march through the Wardroom and the Gunroom by the Band followed by a snake-line of about a hundred singing sailors, with cheers and "Jingle Bells" from all sides. The day's sullage, food scraps etc. had to be put into a boat to be taken out and dumped, and a working party of officers, including the Captain and the Commander, did that rather messy job, amid the cheers of all beholders, who stood in the rain to see the spectacle. Soon after this we were told by the Commander over the speakers that the fun was over, and we reverted to normal and the majority took the opportunity to sleep off the heavy dinner. Quite a day!

By the way, the A.C.F. parcel this year was very good, and the people who contributed towards buying them, did get their money's worth. There were several items in it that I appreciated, such as Ipana tooth-paste, Palmolive shaving cream, a face washer (the sweat-rag I'd been using was about "done"), khaki hankie, gum, dried fruit, chocolate, fruit cake, tinned peaches, plum pudding, talc powder, writing paper and envelopes.

On Friday I had to go ashore on business, and as well as doing that I did

a little Xmas shopping on my own account and it was something similar to a shopping expedition at home as I ended the day extremely tired, sweaty and dirty. I tramped round for miles and fortunately had on a pair of Yank Army boots borrowed from Pete Tonkin, which was as well, because it would have ruined ordinary shoes. It was also terribly hot, and for the first time, my nose and face really copped it properly. I managed to get lunch at one of the Mess Halls for myself and the chaps with me and it was a nice change from our usual fare, although actually nothing "out of the box". Having completed my job, I located the Canteen and purchased 4 cakes of Cashmere Bouquet soap, some chewing gum and some cigarettes. Then I found the Clothing Store, and was able to buy a good pair of gym. shoes, 2 prs. nainsook underpants, a black tie and a small turkish bath towel –unfortunately they had no large towels. So having done my Xmas shopping and the festivities today, I really feel as though Xmas had indeed gone by.

I have two of your letters to answer, No. 26 dated 9th and No. 27 of 13th Dec. The latter arrived today, together with a letter fro my girl-friend at Durban. Now that you mention the Promissory Note from Percy for £600, I begin at last to see some light concerning my investment, and it seems quite satisfactory. I'm afraid I don't go for his scheme regarding the citrus farm at Gosford –not my line! Col Curtis and Peter thank you for your good wishes and both reciprocate.

Coming in the midst of our festivities as it did, your letters about Jim Barnes and the fire on Percy's property was rather a shock, but as it would help nobody for me to feel morbid about it, I'll just pass over the matter. I'll write a few lines to Rita next week and offer my sympathy. We can only be thankful that Perce, Rita and the boys got through unhurt.

None of the many parcels that are on the way to me have arrived since I received yours over a week ago, but perhaps it is as well because I am very well stocked up at present, and in fact am at my wit's end trying to work out where to stow it. The only solution is to eat my way through it!

Cheerio for now Mother, and let's hope for a re-union early in the New Year, which I hope will also bring us Peace and make this our last War-time Xmas.

Your loving son,
Jim.

P.S. Do you realise that I've been on this ship now for 2 years and 1 day. I'm certainly an old timer now. Another one of the originals is going tomorrow – Ted Goodacre, the lad Merle's friends are related to and who originally came from Cudal.

RAN personnel opening Christmas hampers issued by the Australian Comforts Fund representative at the 5th Base Sub Area, Dec. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 077989)

Letter No. 26

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans
Same Address.
24th Dec., 1944

Mom Dear,

As you see by the date, my usual weekly screed this time is being written on Xmas Eve – hard though it is for me to believe it, because I've been working flat out all day, and will resume as soon as I complete this letter. Same applies for tomorrow too I guess, for as I told you in my last letter, we had our "Xmas Day" a week ago!

This week I have no letter of yours to reply to unfortunately and I am anxiously awaiting the results of Jean Earngey's job for me, some news of my story perhaps, and also whether you received the Lottery Ticket I arranged to be sent to you as a little Xmas remembrance. I hope your ticket will collect a £10 prize at the very least!

In spite of no mail from you, I did very well today and received letters from Bubs, and Xmas cards from a N.S.T. girl, my lass at Bellevue Hill and also no less than four parcels. Papers arrived onboard too I believe, but so far I've been too busy to go chasing mine. As I tipped previously, with the arrival of the parcels I have more food stuffs than I have space for, and will simply have to eat my way through them. In a way it was nice timing for them to reach us on Xmas Eve. Two of them were from Bubs and I unpacked them and stowed them into available space. Another was a "Goodland's parcel", once again from Aust. Dry Batteries and I presume it is the one Goody said she was sending me. I haven't opened either it, or the other parcel which is from you, firstly because I haven't had much spare time and secondly because of the space problem and I can cope better with them parcelled up. Hope you don't mind Mum, but I'll thank you in anticipation of the good things in your parcel. It looks very firm and not a bit knocked about, so I think that everything inside will be okay.

Not very much to write about this issue I'm afraid, but I'll bring you up to date in my little doings. I started off the week with an alarming ache in the muscles of the back, which the doctor diagnosed as a chill, but a few treatments under the infra-red ray lamp plus a little liniment massaged in soon got rid of that. I rather enjoyed the rays and the massage, except that the lamp made me so hot and I couldn't stop sweating for hours afterwards.

In stops and starts I've been trying to read a book that we once had at home, I think, "The Way of a Transgressor" by Negley Farson and am enjoying it in small doses. Whilst I was attending the Sick Bay I took the opportunity of weighing myself and found that I am still 11 stone stripped, which isn't too bad as I was only 11.3 when home in June.

You've probably seen from the papers that "Miss Shropshire" topped the poll for the warship's girls with a total of about £850. The ship's company alone subscribed about £225 of that. The next girl could only raise about £250 altogether, and the ship's contribution alone, was more than any of the others raised. "Shropshire" boys ought to be popular at the new CUSA canteen!

Had another go at making icecream from the mixture on Friday night, and put it in the meat cold room at 6 a.m. yesterday morning. We got it out at 3 p.m. today, but it wasn't a huge success, probably due to the fact that we only mixed it with a spoon instead of with a proper mixer. As it was, it was sort of frozen in chips, but when it melted down a little, it was quite pleasant to eat (or drink) and I opened a tin of peaches to go with it and we were pretty bloated when we finished. The unanimous opinion was that though it mightn't give "Peter's" serious opposition, it was the best we'd eaten for 6 months.

A Xmas card from the Marrises arrived during the week, so please mention it if you're speaking to them on the phone. I'll write later, but I don't know how later as I have quite a few letters to catch up including one to the girl in Sth. Africa, and I'm two behind now for Bubs I think, but as I said, I've been working pretty solidly. Let's hope I get my reward next quarter and that you'll be able to put a new title on your letters to me.

I'll enclose our specially printed Xmas Carol sheet as a souvenir for you, in spite of the fact that "peace on earth and goodwill towards men" sounds a bit out of place coming from us. However let's hope that next year we can sing it

and mean it!

My thoughts go right home to you now on this Xmas Eve Mother Darling, and I wonder what you are doing right at this moment. Merry Xmas Mother, in spite of all our troubles, a Happy New Year and God bless you.

Your ever loving son,
Jim.

Leading Signalman Les Birrell of Manly, NSW, on HMAS Shropshire sewing damaged signal flags with a Finnish made Jones hand sewing machine, Sep. 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 305319)

On the bridge wing of Shropshire, Signal Bosun Foster McKenzie supervises visual signallers who are communicating with the cruiser HMAS Hobart by sending and receiving flashing light signals by Morse code, Jul. 1945. (Australian War Memorial, 112189)

Letter No. 27

S.5294
Ldg. Wtr. J.F. Yeomans
As usual. 28th Dec., 1944

Mum,

Since last writing you there have been a couple of developments, so I'll bring you up to date. Firstly, the old story about an Officers' Training Course for me has been revived and I have been told to stand by in readiness to go to another ship where a "Board" of senior officers will interview me and make the final decision as to whether I appear to have officer-like qualities. The idea I believe is to let a man either talk his way in or out. If they think that I'm just the boy they need, they give me a priority as regards training, and probably I'd do a course at Flinders commencing in April. The course lasts 4 months and then if I pass, you have a Sub-Lieutenant (S) in the family and I have to sell all my present uniforms. That's one part that annoys me! I still don't know what is to happen as regards the eye-sight test or when the medical check-up takes place, but I'll face that problem when I meet it.

After almost 4 years as a "lower deck-man", this is going to be quite a change for me if I go through with it. I've not yet decided whether I intend to pass at the end of the course and may yet go through it with tongue in cheek – get the new experience it offers and welcome the break of routine and freedom from responsibility. However, I'll adopt the policy of crossing my bridges when I come to them.

When I next write, I'll let you know how I think the interview went off.

As a little link with home, I opened your parcel on Xmas Day as seemed most appropriate and was very pleased with the contents. The cake is up to your best standards and some other lads who had a piece were also loud in praise. It was quite wholesome and fresh, whilst the Gartrell White cakes in sealed tins in the A.C.F. parcels were nearly all unfortunately mildewed – much to our disappointment. I was very pleased to see the watch band you put in, so

that I can wear my watch again. At times, it was almost essential to have a watch, I used to tie it on with white tape.

The watch bands are pretty poor quality now aren't they, but it should last until I get home anyway. Did you get me a plain new band for my "good" watch at home? About the parcel, I was really very pleased with it and only one item I need was missing... a bottle of Fisher's!! However, don't bother about sending it now.

I've spent this week working solidly, but we have the closing of the quarterly books well under control now and it should be back to normal by next week and we can stop working 12 hours a day and more in the Office. Xmas Day was no different to any other for me, except that I attended the Communion Service. For the rest of the day I worked harder than on any normal week day and dinner certainly wasn't exactly festive fare – bully beef and prunes! Still we can't complain as we had our turkey etc. a week before. Can't eat it and have it I guess! I wish I was home for a wild fling on New Year's Eve, but I've a shrewd guess where I'll be. If I see the New Year come in, it will simply mean I'm going off watch – 8p.m. to midnight – or coming on – midnight to 4a.m. A lovely prospect! I'm doing the Morning Watch – 4a.m. to 8a.m. now.

That's all for now Mum – cheerio, chin up and don't worry about rumours.

All my love,
Jim.

Group portrait of the officers of the Shropshire on the quarterdeck, 1943-45. (Australian War Memorial, 305319)

Letter No. 29

S.5294
Ldg. Wtr. J.F. Yeomans
The Same.
11th January, 1945

Mum,

As you've no doubt guessed, if only by the time gap in my letters, we haven't been near mail facilities for quite a while. In case you are worrying, as I suppose you must, this brief note is just to let you know that I'm still comparatively healthy and happy. Happy because I'm healthy and healthy (comparatively anyway) in spite of the heat, lack of sleep and lack of bathes and shaves. Somehow I'm managing to keep my skin okay but a couple of the lads with me get merry hell from the old enemy "prickly heat".

Just at present I'm doing the Middle Watch and writing at this time because it's the most leisurely period in our day. When I come off watch when Col Curtis relieves me at 4a.m. I'll have a wash instead of going back to sleep. Food of late has definitely been very "scratch" and I've had good reason to be glad of the large number of parcels I received around Xmas. I don't think I'll be concerned with the space they took up much longer.

In my last letter I remember mentioning that I was to go before a Board of Senior Officers to allow them to see if I am a suitable type to make an officer. I went over to the other ship dressed my neatest with hair combed and all, and ready to impart to them some of my great store of knowledge. They spoke mainly of "service" problems for the best part of an hour and had me "in a corner" more than once. However, they seemed satisfied with me (naturally) and called me back after they had exchanged views on me and I was informed that in "their opinion" I should be recommended as an Officer Candidate. They submit a report to the Big Boss and provided he hasn't got a liver, my recommendation goes through, so it looks as if I might be back in Melbourne for the Winter – a beaut thought!

Well Mother, having had no mail there is not much to write about. However, I won't close this letter yet as I don't know how or when mail will be going off and maybe before then I'll have more to tell you.

Later – Reading through the "Scandal Section" of an old Sunday Tele. I noticed that an old friend of Perce Curveys and Uncle Bill's – "Mac" Turbet – was having wife trouble. Apparently she hadn't been exactly behaving herself and Mac got his divorce. Poor old Mac – too slow for her I suppose. I noticed he had Albert Barkell as his solicitor.

Reading through another old Melbourne paper – the "Australasian" I saw a photo of the first girl friend I had in Melbourne – Nan Spiers. She was bridesmaid for her sister who married a Yank flyer. Nan looked very sophisticated on the arm of the best man – a Yank lieut!

12-1-45 – As I expected when I delayed this note, we have now received official permission to tell you something of what we have been doing. You would have probably guessed anyhow as I suppose the radio and the newspapers will carry a full story. The fact is of course that we took part in the recent operative at Lingayen Gulf in Luzon, the main island of the Philippines. Getting close to Tojo's home ground now aren't we? As usual we put on a good performance and even if I say it "as shouldn't" I think we all deserve a good pat on the back for our part in the job. The Army boys have a lot to thank the Navy for whether they know it or not.[12]

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[12] In the early morning of 6 January 1945, a large Allied force began approaching the shores of Lingayen from Lingayen Gulf, on the island of Luzon. U.S. Navy and R.A.N. warships began bombarding suspected Japanese positions along the coast for three days. On "S-Day", 9 January, the U.S. 6th Army landed on a roughly 40 km beachhead at the base of the Gulf.

Despite the success in driving out the Japanese forces stationed there, the allies suffered relatively heavy losses due to kamikaze attacks. Naval historian Samuel Eliot Morison estimated that on 6 January alone, around twenty-eight kamikaze hit 15 ships, representing a hit rate of nearly 50% and resulting hundreds of deaths. The heavy cruiser HMAS Australia was struck five times, with forty-four dead and seventy-two wounded.

Jim once told me about Leading Seamen Roy Cazaly (not the AFL legend), who was captaining Shropshire's port-side pom pom gun in the early hours of the morning when Shropshire was attacked by a kamikaze. Cazaly's accurate fire disintegrated the aircraft just before it hit the ship, with pieces falling on both sides of the cruiser as it broke in half, earning him the Distinguished Service Medal (DSM).

We spent a considerable time closed up at our Action Station and on a couple of occasions I had good beard growths and both my body and clothes were pretty grimy before I was able to do something about it.

Did I hear you ask if I was scared? I don't think I'd best answer that till I get home and can show you a good performance with all the appropriate actions! The main thing though is my hide is still intact.

Today the weather and sea have been a trifle boisterous and on two occasions I've had my ardour a little dampened by salt water. The first occasion was at breakfast. All of a sudden a big "greenie" (wave) slopped against the ship's side and shot a few barrels of water over a score of unsuspecting mortals – including yours truly. Breakfasts, cups of tea and clothing were well soused. After that lot I changed my battle-dress for a clean set and did my morning's toil.

After lunch I strolled on to the upper deck and breathed in a few lungfuls of the good fresh air. Another solitary individual was doing the same and then all of a sudden ye ship gave a lurch and a few tons of water cascaded on to us. (Much loud laughter from all onlookers – I didn't think it was so funny!) So once again I had to change my apparel.

It's still rolling and pitching like the devil, but I guarantee that I won't give it an opportunity to drench me again, even though it will mean sleeping below decks.

I don't know if I mentioned previously that the ship was planning to produce a book and I got well under way with my contribution this afternoon. A short story I've had in my mind in outline is beginning to emerge and I'll let you know how I get on with it. That's all for now Mother dear, but remember that no matter what you hear, try not to worry over much about me.

Regards to the folks at home and all my love.

Your affectionate son,
Jim.

P.S. The contents of all my Xmas parcels came in very handy while we were at Action Stations.

The U.S. Navy battleship USS Pennsylvania (BB-38) leading USS Colorado (BB-45) and the cruisers USS Louisville (CA-28), USS Portland (CA-33), and USS Columbia (CL-56) into Lingayen Gulf, Philippines, Jan. 1945. (US Navy Photo, 80-G-59525)

View of the port side of HMAS Australia showing the damage caused by Japanese kamikaze attacks, Jan. 1945. (Imperial War Museums, A 29381)

Letter No. 30

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans,
Same Address.
21st January, 1945.

Mum,

My letters have been inclined to be few and far between for the past few weeks I suppose but we haven't been in a position to get mail off as a rule and there hasn't been much that we could write about either. Add to that the fact that we are still without mail, about 4 weeks since our last issue, and you can see that I have had no great incentive to write, although I know you worry when my letters are not regular. However, I hope you have realised ere this that I am still quite okay after the last shin-dig in spite of the fact that I could use a few nice home-cooked meals à la Mrs. Yeomans! Only this morning as we were going about our own particular business at dawning some of the chaps were telling others where they had dreamed they were last night and where they wished they could be this morning. My wish was that at that hour I could have been carrying in a couple of cups of tea and some lightly browned toast to eat on the edge of Mum's bed. Everyone then thought too that it would be a very nice place to be. I know who will be bringing the tea to who when I DO get home, but still it is a nice thought isn't it?

You may notice t hat the old "typer" is getting a bit worse and it's hardly surprising considering that the old machine had a nice seawater bath the other day. We took it to pieces and tried to clean it but none of us are experts in that line, and hence the result. However we'll have to battle on with it untill we get a chance to demand another better one. In a minute I'll tell you how the salt water bath came about. First there is a prelude.

Remember in the last letter I mentioned getting wetted by the old sea twice in one day? Well, that boisterous sea and wind kept up for quite a time, and although it wasn't as bad as a typhoon we ran into after the first Philippine operation it was bad enough. (Remind me to tell you about that typhoon when

I get home and the accompaniment for the "Buckley's Canadiol" ad is on the radio!)[13]

The night following the day on which I was twice caught by the sea, I set my tiny low stretcher up under the ship's boat where I customarily sleep. The ship was rolling like ships always seem to in a Hollywood storm scene and at first I had a little difficulty in dozing off. However I was well in the arms of Morpheus and the time was about 12.30 when suddenly a terrific wave bashed against the ship and simply deluged me. I didn't know what the devil had happened at first and the coldness of it took my breath away. It has shifted me and the stretcher bodily for a couple of yards in spite of the fact that I was mostly shielded by the boat I slept under. Everything belonging to me was soaked of course - rug, stretcher, overalls and my shoes were nowhere to be seen. I stood up in my socks (cussing something awful) and the deck was running with water and the little phosphorescent bodies in it seemed to be leering brightly at me in my misfortune. I took my bedding out of the way and started to look for my shoes, which luckily I had tied together by the laces. I eventually found then, kept onboard by a very small scupper that goes round the ship and it one of them was my sheaf knife which I always slip in my shoe before turning in. That is instead of wearing it to bed in its sheath - I'd hate it to come loose during the night and skewer me. Anyway, I picked up all my belongings and joined the stream of blokes going below for a hotter but more secure sleeping billet. A lot of them had been drenched at much higher points than I was sleeping. After hanging up all the wet things to dry, I managed to get to sleep and then was called at 3.45 a.m. to go on the morning watch, as you may well imagine, caked with dried salt and still paddling in bare feet as my shoes were still saturated.

You'd think that was enough! But no, when I came off the morning watch at 8 o'clock, had breakfast and a wash, I made my way to ship's Office to commence work and found them just commencing to a mopup. A "greenie" had just come through the open portholes. I settled down and helped with the mopping up operations and there was certainly plenty of water and it had splashed everywhere. We finally got it dry and a couple of buckets of water were just

[13]Typhoon Cobra, also known as the Typhoon of 1944 or Halsey's Typhoon (named after Admiral William Halsey Jr.), was the United States Navy designation for the powerful tropical cyclone that struck the U.S. Pacific Fleet in December 1944. The storm sank three destroyers, killed 790 sailors, damaged 9 other warships, and swept dozens of aircraft overboard off their aircraft carriers.

about filled with our labours. We were pretty hot with the portholes closed so a bright lad named Sherwin thought the seas had abated and opened one of them. No sooner done than in came another greenie. What we didn't call him. So down we went on our hands and knees again and mopped the joint dry again. After that little lot, we got out the ledgers etc. and started the day's work in earnest. After a little while, as a result of our earlier labours and the present stuffiness etc. we were very warm and opened the ports again as the ship was on a "safe" course. A little of this and I got uneasy and shut one of the ports. The chief told me to leave the other open as he thought it was still "safe". Was it heck! The ship changed course without us noticing it and there was a noise like an explosion and suddenly the whole office seemed filled with water. Did I get drenched? Not to mention the books and everything else. It was a king-pin! So down we went again with our already wet cloths. We could have cried only for a peverse sense of humour that made us all laugh until our sides nearly burst, but we didn't take kindly to laughter from others as Col Curtis found when he stuck his head in to guffaw and get hit by three unerringly flung deck cloths. What a day. From then on we suffered the heat and left the ports securely closed - no more risks. And I changed my clothes yet again!

That night I took no risks and slept down below. But do you think I could sleep, tired though I was! What with the heat and a nagging tooth I wasn't in the race. So next morn first thing I made a date with the dentist and he found that one of my teeth was not all it should be. In order to see how far it had gone he drilled a cavity in it like a mine, and meanwhile I'm nearly passing out from the agony of his research. He was inclined to pull it, but finished up putting in a temporary filling and I'm to see him on Thursday and he'll decide what's best. At the time I would have let him pull it cheerfully just to be finished with the pain, but it has behaved OK since then, so he may fill it. I'll let you know what happens. That's the second tooth to trouble me since we left home last time. A darn nuisance these teeth of mine, aren't they! However, I suppose we are lucky to have a "fang bosun" right at hand.

I finished typing that short story I was telling you about and a couple of people that read it liked it, so I've submitted it for the ship's Magazine.

That's about the limit of my news Mum, so I'll tie up now. I've written Bubs one letter about a week ago, but you can tell her I won't write again until I get some mail.

All my love Mother,
Jim.

An oil tanker struggles to maintain position during the heavy typhoon known as Cobra, Dec. 1944. (US Navy - National Archives Photo)

Letter No. 31

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans,
Same Address.
27th January, 1945.

Mum,

Since last writing to you, we have trapped a small issue of mail – very small, and disappointed our visions of catching up on our back mail. Perhaps I was fortunate in getting 3 letters, but the most recent of them was dated 21st December. One was from a lass at Bondi, one from Pinto (in which he cheered me up by saying it looked like a quiet Xmas and that I wasn't missing much!) and the other was from Merle. Merle thanked me for the Lottery Ticket I sent to her & Cyril for Xmas, so presume you got yours also. Hope one of you had some luck! As you see, there was no letter from you and I'm all agog to get your next letters as there are several things I want to be informed about and they should be in your screeds. Apart from the small issue of letters, there was quite a lot of parcels and papers and I got one parcel from the Assoc. of Accts. Unfortunately they'd nearly all got wet on the way up, and the only thing I salvaged from my parcel was a Xmas pudding, which we ate today when we felt a trifle hungry.

No doubt you've heard that young Bob Bradshaw was injured recently and that fact had you worried about me. All I know is that he was hurt, but don't know how badly or anything, so I sincerely trust for his own and his mother's sake that it was not very serious and that he has a speedy recovery.

As you may have seen or heard in the news, we received a fair amount of kudos for our part in the last show. As long as we receive our fair share of leave is what concerns me most! 30 week now and it certainly seems like it. A darned long time to spend entirely on the comparatively small space taken up by one ship. I notice it says in the news that we are credited with destroying 3 Jap planes and probably shooting down several others. A very conservative statement I would say.

Remember I mentioned in my last letter that I had a tooth requiring attention. I went along to the "fang bosun" on Thursday morning, and although he shook his head about it, he finished up putting in a filling. I think the excavation in the tooth is about the biggest he's seen outside a mining centre. However I suppose it is better to have the tooth in, even if only the roots are my natural property and the rest is "dentist's art".

Whether or not the tooth had anything to do with it, I can't rightly say, but for the past two days I've been plagued with the very devil of a cold – one of those very sniffly ones and it's made me most unhappy. As if I needed any encouragement the Doctor has been giving me some dope to make me sweat. Up till tonight I felt particularly rotten, very "loggy" in the head, to the detriment of my work, I might say. However, following my sponge down after supper, I feel 100% better and am much improved right now, and a good night's sleep might fix me right up again. I certainly hope so. I'm sick of both sweating and sniffling!

Merle mentioned in her letter that she was hoping Cyril would get compassionate posting back to Melbourne early this year, and I hope so too. That will allow you to concentrate on me when I get home. I guess I'll be a big enough problem to warrant your undivided attention but I do think I'm entitled to go a little wild when I DO get home, so I'm warning you well in advance. Is that okay with you?

Not much to natter about just now I'm afraid. I could whinge about our food right now, but I don't suppose it would do much good. Camp pie, bully beef and dehydrated spud! Ugh! Am I sick of it? Oh well. I guess I'm in the wrong Navy for luxuries.

Cheerio for now Mother – give my cheerios to the folks and express my sympathy to Mrs. Bradshaw and Bob if you think she'd appreciate it. I do really feel very sorry for the poor kid.

Till next time, hoping ardently for some mail soon,

Your loving son,
Jim.

Letter No. 32

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans,
Same Address
4 February, 1945

Mum,

The mail situation as usual stinks – still no letters and it's beginning to get some of us down. However, as a consolation prize we received a few more parcels and papers. I was very pleased to find one for me - A Goodland's parcel from Mrs. Marris. If you remember, I had thought that I'd received her parcel a long time ago and wrote thanking her for it. As it turned out, that particular parcel was evidently sent by Mrs. Goodwin & daughter. So I shan't acknowledge this one to Mrs. M. although I feel darned glad to get it.

This letter and in fact all my letters (not that I write many lately) get harder and harder to write on account of scarcity of both topics and mail to answer. I wrote to the old Pinto the other day, but he can understand topics that would be double-dutch to you.

A very nice surprise yesterday afternoon when we were allowed to swim over the ship's side. Firstly we were told all the horrors of the waters – tropical ear, sharks etc. and that meant of course that any misfortune would be our own fault. That didn't deter many though and in the two twenty minute periods we were allowed to swim, quite a gang got in the water. Just as a precaution a couple of "shark sentries" with rifles were posted on the deck overlooking the swimmers and we were more scared of them than of the old familiar sharks. We dived off the ship's side, which is quite high enough when it comes to a dive and there were some beautiful "belly floppers" from the no-hopers. I milled around enjoying the swim for about ¼ hour and I think I must have done too much, being a bit unaccustomed after being away from it for so long, and so when I began to clamber up one of the scrambling nets draped over the side for our benefit, I got about half-way and began to think I wouldn't make it. As you may guess, I didn't need any rocking to put me to by-by last night. I've spent

a few hours in the sun this week, in the hope of deriving some of the Vitamin "C" it's supposed to contain and have once again got a respectable tan. But you should see Curtis! He's simply BLACK – all over too! If he doesn't stay in the shade his wife won't have anything to do with him when he goes home.

Went to the pictures one night during the week – the show was "It started with Eve" with Deanna Durbin and Charles Laughton. It was quite an entertaining show though of course pretty ancient. The show was held 'tween decks so you can imagine just how warm it was and most of us tried to keep a little cooler by frantically waving homemade fans constructed in the old childhood manner out of newspapers. Reminded me of all the old dowagers in the bygone days who were champion fan-wavers according to all accounts.

I still play a game of chess whenever I get the chance and am as keen about it as ever. According to the papers I see that a wave of the chess craze has hit Sydney and chess sets are almost unprocurable now. Quite a few of the boys onboard have taken up the game now, and the sight of chess players is no longer a unique affair. The Chief Writer is often my opponent and we have some sterling battles. I'd like to have a set of my own, but I'd like a really good miniature set that I could carry easily when travelling by train. If you see a really nice little set during your shopping tours, snap it up for me and blow the expense, but otherwise don't worry and I can look for such a one for myself. However there is something you can buy for me - a mirror 5" x 3". It must be exactly that size as I want it to fit my shaving kit – you remember that one Pinto gave me a long time back.

As you no doubt see from the current news, the war situation looks very cheering and by the time this letter reaches you, Hitler's Germany ought to be knocked out of the War, thus allowing us to concentrate on the Nips, who already seem to be ready for a good, strong knock-out punch from us.[14] The news of Japanese prisoners being liberated is a feature I am very pleased indeed to hear of, and I hope that it is cheering to Aunty and I only hope we can send Perce home very soon. Until then I can only feel that no matter how much I feel like a whinge, Perce is so much worse off and although you and I don't see much of each other, we are at least in constant touch.

[14] Adolf Hitler was to commit suicide two months later on 30 April during the Battle of Berlin, followed by Germany's formal surrender of its armed forces on 8 May 1945.

I must ask your forbearance with the scrappy typing again, but as you can see, this old machine is still very much showing the effects of the salt water bath it had no so long ago.

Cheerio for now Mother, and my regards to the folks back home.

Your loving son,
Jim.

Despite heavy tanning (and not to mention the high risk of skin cancer), Col Curtis's wife, Anne did take him back, after the war. This photo is from a recent interview with Anne Curtis where she recalls her time in the Women's Royal Australia Naval Service (WRANS) as a Coder, 2024. DVA (Department of Veterans Affairs)

Letter No. 33

S.5294
Leading Writer J.F. Yeomans,
Same Address.
11th February, 1945

Mum,

The end of the week once again brings your favourite "War Correspondent" to his old typer to give you the low-down (as allowed by our Censor) on the Yeomans' war effort. Just take a look at the number of this letter – "33" – do you know that my records show that apart from cables & post-cards etc. I only wrote you 34 letters in the whole time I was away on the England trip. Wonder if this perchance seems longer because I don't have the same diversions I had over there. Ah, to be in England now that February is there – or any other month for that matter, I'd still much rather be there! Well, as I was a-going to say, still no signs of mail. For the umpteenth time in the past month, there is a buzz that mail is near at hand, and there is a faint possibility that this time it may be dinkum. If that is so, I'll write you another letter in a day or so, just in answer to all the letters from you that I anticipate receiving.

Things are getting bad. My private larder in my locker is now running very low and the result is that one of my two pet cock-roaches (I'm not sure whether it's Dave or Daphne) have died. Starvation, I suppose! Course it might be that he/she didn't dodge my mug when I put it in the other day, but I think starvation is the more probable diagnosis. Poor Daphne, or is it Dave. I'll have to ask the other lads if they have an eligible unattached "cockie" to mate with my orphan. It's a sad old world. Our own food problems are negligible. Everything has been simplified - no menus or anything complicated like that. We know that it will be bully or camouflaged bully and dehydrated spud every meal and we're never disappointed, so what have we got to worry about. Ho hum!!

We're allowed to mention that we had some guests onboard last Sunday – ex-prisoners of the Japs. We were disappointed that there were no Aussies amongst them but were glad to see and talk with the chaps, all of them British

Army fellows. As you can imagine, they had some tales to tell and all were delighted to be free once again after such a long spell of captivity. All I'm at liberty to repeat is that the food and medical attention they received were rather inadequate. Rather an understatement, wouldn't you say? Everyday happenings as far as the war is concerned regarding our present equipment etc. was amazing to them, such as the 12,000 pound bombs the R.A.F. are so liberally dosing the Huns with these days. They almost refused to believe that such a huge bomb was possible. Their spirits are all high now, and as they left the ship, one of the wags yelled to us "Come over to England some time and we'll teach you to play cricket". Cheeky devils aren't they?

Since last writing, I've been swimming over the side a few more times, but I still think I'd prefer Bronte. One day we were recalled from the water because some water snakes were sighted nearby, and water lice seem to be pretty prevalent round here and have given me many a shrewd nip yesterday and today. Still I suppose it's worth putting up with for the sake of the exercise.

Went to the pictures again last night – below decks of course and as hot as –guess what! The picture last night was Mae West's latest – "The Heat's On"; also named "Tropicana" I believe. Mae has had her day I'm afraid, but there was a coloured girl named Hazel Scott in it who I previously knew by reputation, and she has a very pleasant smile, a nice voice and Mamma do you think she can play the old piano. In fact she sits on a swivel stool and plays TWO pianos at once – she's really tops.

There was a very good debate onboard today - the semi-final of the competition between Supply Assistants and Chief Petty Officers. The subject was concerning the merits of private enterprise and nationalization of industry. Chiefs spoke for nationalization and won very easily. The Chief Writer was Captain of their team and both he and his colleague spoke very ably.

The one favourable result of our prolonged and enforced sojourn from home has been that my bank a/c has benifited. As I think that it might as well work for me since I had to work for it, you might find out from Percy if he could use another £250 of mine on the same terms as the previous lot. If he can, I'll make it over to him just as soon as I get home. I may as a well use it in that way if he wants it.

Not much in the way of topics as you can see, so I'll get this effort on its way. Cheerio dear, and let's hope its not too long before I see Sydney-town again.

Your loving son,
Jim.

Hazel Scott during her legendary performance playing two pianos for "Black and White", 1943 (hazelscott.com)

Letter No. 34 (The last letter)

S.5294
Ldg. Wtr. J.F. Yeomans,
Same Address.
18th Feb., 1945

Mum,

It's good to have some mail to answer at last!! Two issues during this week, although both were rather small. Your No. 28 dated 20th Dec., (complete with sprig of Xmas bush) and No. 31 dated 7th Jan. (complete with airgraph from South Africa) arrived on Thursday and Saturday respectively. On Thursday I also received a Xmas card from Pat Thornton at N.S.T. (Colin Ayres' fiancee) and one from "Tug" Wilson at F.N.D. On Saturday there was one from Bubs, one from the Durban lass and one from the gal at Bellevue Hill. Lifted my morale a bit anyway. Apparently there are quite a few missing, as witness the fact that your letters 27, 29, and 30 are still to come.

I'm glad that No. 28 arrived okay, because it contained a couple of items I'd been anxious to hear about. I was surprised to learn that Ross was still around as I thought he had to go back to Moresby. Where is he now?

Very pleased to learn that my story has been sent on to Perce from Navy Office and hope he can do something about getting it placed. Did you read through it yet? I also wanted Bubs to see it too, because it would say so many things I can't or don't usually put in letters and give you a fairly clear idea as to how we live.

Also glad to hear that Jean E. was able to carry out that job, or at least get someone to do it. What did you think of the finished articles?

By the way, Tug Wilson said in his letter that he is starting an "Honour Board" of the old boys from Drafting Office (E) and wants a photo of me to put in it. Have a look at the last lot of photos that were taken of me and send him a copy of the best likeness. Just put in a little explanatory note and address

it to:-

C.P.O. Writer D.Wilson
Drafting Office (E)
Flinders Naval Depot
Victoria

I must go to that Studio when I get home and have a couple of good ones taken. Have you still got that receipt from the place?

All this panic about getting a flat for Bubs and Lofty seems to me to have been unnecessary. Why didn't they move into Percy's house whilst they were up at Kurrajong! Seems too easy!

Afraid my "Betsy" wasn't in the WRANS photo you cut out – they were officers and she was just a common "sailor girl" in spite of her "title".

Notice what you say about shortage of Xmas cards, but hope you sent Mrs. Tracey a greeting of some kind. I think that Mrs. Chalk's gift was very good, even if a little unusual.

I'm very sorry that you and Merle had all your excitement for nothing, but as you say, there'll come a day. Hope the juicy steak Merle bought for me wasn't wasted. Wish I could have had it. I'm "fed up" and I mean that both ways, with bully beef. After all, a person would get sick of even the most delectable dish 3 meals a day and 7 days a week – even if it is often "disguised".

Glad to hear you entertained the big boy "Pinto" and I suppose he's beginning to get a bit restless having been home so long. We seem to take it in turns to "fight the War" don't we. Maybe I'll be home to console his mother in his absence!

Thanks for the cutting about the swimming – I wish I could have been there to see Biddulph, Severs and Donaldson battle out the 440. Should have been a very interesting race!

I hope Merle doesn't hold against me the fact that I missed mentioning her birthday, but things were kinda busy. I'll see if I can remember Percy's although I don't know if he'll thank me for it – he's 40 this birthday isn't he? I must

admit he's worn well though and if I look as well at his age will have reason to feel satisfied.

Which of course brings me onto your birthday. I think I'll be able to arrange a nice present for you – something you've wanted in the house for quite a long time. That should keep you guessing until it arrives!

Speaking of things for the house, I've an option to buy a set of Encyclopaedia Britannica at a moderate price, but wonder where we could put them as there are 25 volumes and each is about as big as the family Bible. Let me know if you think we have room, otherwise I'll tell the chap definitely "No".

Not too much to tell at this end for the week – just the usual, with a couple of days on which we had a swim and I also got in some sun-bathing and now have the best tan I've possessed. It's really something – I'll have to get a photo taken with me wearing just my identity disc so that you can fully appreciate it.[15]

Next week should bring us some relief from the everlasting bully-beef, because we are at last getting some food. I hope it's not all bully anyway – we can certainly use some fresh stuff.

May be in a debate next week – have been asked to partner the Instructor Lieutenant and oppose the Army Captain and his Sergeant in a debate about "Service-women". I don't think any of us know much about the subject, but I'm always willing to have a try!

Only found out a couple of days ago, that another chap onboard has the same type of camera as me and I talked him into giving me a film, on condition that I give him a print of every photo I take. Should be able to get a couple of interesting snaps to show you when I do get home.

Still no word about my promotion or draft etc. But I suppose I must curb my patience still further. I'm getting good at that now.[16]

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[15]Jim doesn't mention the action that Shropshire was involved in on 16 February, shelling enemy positions on Corregidor Beach in the Philippines alongside HMA Ships Arunta and Warramunga.

[16]The long awaited promotion was not to come until 27 November 1945 when Jim, by then based at HMAS Penguin in Sydney, was made Petty Officer Writer not long before he was demobilised on 21 March 1946

All for now Mum – cheerio and all my best to the home-folks.

Your loving son,
Jim.

Jim in RAN Service Dress, 1942-45. (Jim Yeomans)

Afterword

Jim's journey with HMAS Shropshire, the "lucky ship" that carried him through Tiger Territory, concluded on 29 April 1945, when he was transferred to the new HMAS Penguin naval facility in Balmoral on Sydney Harbour. It marked the end of nearly two and a half years at sea, and a year of naval battles that had taken him from the shores of New Guinea to Leyte Gulf in the Philippines.

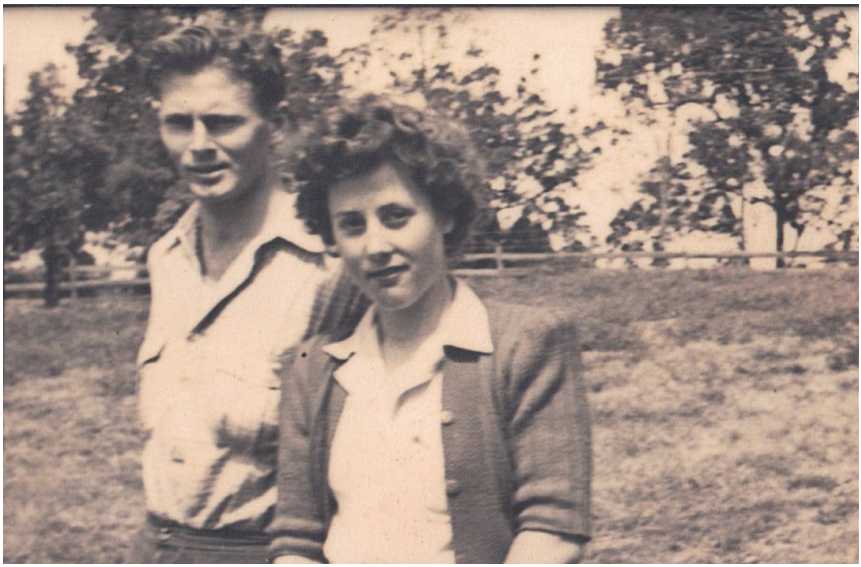
The return to Sydney was, above all, a return to his mother. No doubt overjoyed to be reunited with Ada (and liberated from a steady diet of bully beef and potato powder), Jim remained at Penguin and later HMAS Rushcutter until he was finally demobilised in March 1946. The war was over, and the peace he had so often mused about in his letters was about to begin.

That new life arrived, quite unexpectedly, at a social tennis match where he met his future bride, Lorna Ferguson. After a few informal get-togethers, Jim took Lorna on their first proper date. Unfortunately, the evening ended early and in disaster due to a plate of bad prawns Jim had ordered. Despite the abrupt end to the night, the couple's connection endured, and they were married in April 1947.

The restless young man of the Flinders letters, itching to receive his draft, now sought the stability of civilian life. He resumed his career as an accountant and, after catching up on lost time at Bronte Beach, started working for his brother's firm, P.A. Yeomans & Company, before establishing his own business several years later. With Lorna, he moved first to Penshurst and then to 40 Marine Drive, Oatley, where they raised their four children: Lawrence, Martyn, Guy, and Meggan.

Perce Curvey, Jim's cousin who had spent the war as a PoW on the Thai-Burma railway, survived the war. He was moved to a PoW camp in Fukuoka, Japan in early 1945 before returning to Australia once the war ended. He later returned to attend Anzac Day commemorations at Kanchanaburi, site of the famed Bridge on the River Kwai.

ABOVE: Jim was awarded the following medals following the end of WWII: The 1939-1945 Star, the Atlantic Star, the Pacific Star, the Defence Medal, The British War Medal 1939-1945 and the Australian Service Medal 1939-1945. (Jim Yeomans)
BELOW: Jim with Lorna Ferguson at "Yobarnie", Sep. 1945. (Jim Yeomans)



Jim with Lorna Ferguson at Bronte Beach, 1945-46. (Jim Yeomans)

HMAS Shropshire & Jim Yeomans: Timeline and Service in WWII

Pre WWII

9 May 1920 James Fulton Yeomans was born in Harden, NSW, to parents Ada Pearle and James Yeomans. He was the baby brother to Percival Alfred "Perce", Linda Merle "Merle" and Floris May "Bubs"

1927 Jim and the family move to Bondi when his father is sent there to drive electric trains

24 February 1927 Shropshire's keel is laid at William Beardmore & Co, Dalmuir (Scotland)

12 September 1929 Commissioned into the Royal Navy (RN). Shropshire was a London-class County-class heavy cruiser. In the 1930s she served in the Mediterranean. Notable pre-war operations included supporting Britain's response to the Abyssinia Crisis (1935–36) and evacuating refugees during the Spanish Civil War (22 August–16 September 1936).

25 May 1932 Jim's father was killed in a train accident at Mittagong, when he was struck by a bridge while standing on the fender. Because of this and the lingering effects of the Depression, Jim's high school education was cut short.

Early WWII (1939–1942)

September 1939 World War II begins. Shropshire assigned to South Atlantic patrols

1940–41 After a refit, she escorted Allied convoys in the Indian Ocean and South Atlantic. In early 1941 she joined the British Red Sea Force; Shropshire bombarded Mogadishu and supported Commonwealth armies assaulting Italian Somaliland, aiding capture of Kismayu

5 March 1941 Jim was mobilized for service and assigned to the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) training base HMAS Rushcutter in Rushcutters Bay, Sydney, where he served as a Writer[17].

2 May 1941 Jim was transferred to HMAS Cerberus at Flinders Naval Depot on the Mornington Peninsula

9 August 1942 HMAS Canberra was sunk at the Battle of Savo Island. The British Government responds by offering Shropshire to Australia as a replacement. Winston Churchill formally announced on 8 September 1942 that Shropshire would transfer to the RAN.

15 October 1942 Jim departed Flinders Naval Depot for London

Jim joins the Shropshire (April–October 1943)

December 1942–June 1943 Underwent refit at Chatham and preparation for RAN service (catapult and scout plane removed)

7 April 1943 Captain John A. Collins (RAN) took command

20 April 1943 Commissioned into RAN as HMAS Shropshire (The Australian government recognized the ship as commissioned from 17 April 1943 to ensure RAN pay/practice under Collins' command)

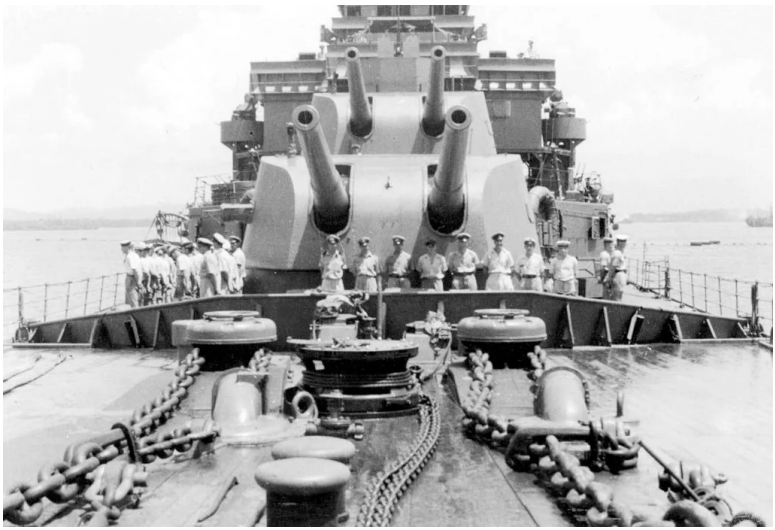
25 June 1943 Jim joins the crew of HMAS Shropshire as the ship is formally handed over to the RAN

[17] "Writer" was a naval administrative/clerical rank

August–October 1943 Departed UK via Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands, where she was visited by King George VI 12 August 1943. Arrived Cape Town 4 September, Fremantle late September, and Sydney 2 October 1943.

1 October 1943 Jim was promoted to rank "Leading Writer"

30 October 1943 Joined Task Force 74 at Brisbane under Rear Admiral Crutchley. TF 74 was a unit of the US Seventh Fleet, and on Shropshire's arrival other ships then belonging to the force included HMA Ships Australia, Warramunga and Arunta.



Ships company at cruising stations as an RAN warship, HMAS Shropshire, on its way to the assembly point for the attack on Japanese held Hollandia in Dutch New Guinea, April 1944 (Australian War Memorial, 016992)

New Guinea Campaigns (December 1943 – July 1944)

December 1943 Bombarded and covered Allied landings at Arawe and Cape Gloucester (New Britain) during Operation Goodtime. This helped isolate the major Japanese base at Rabaul

March 1944 Participated in the Admiralty Islands campaign (seizing Manus Island and nearby targets)

April 1944 Supported the Hollandia–Aitape landings (Hollandia and Humboldt Bay), part of Operation Reckless to secure NW New Guinea

May 1944 Backed operations at Wakde, Sarmi and Biak (NW New Guinea), providing naval gunfire as US forces advanced; then returned to Sydney for a refit

12 July 1944 Supported the landing at Aitape (New Guinea) for Australia's 6th Division

28 July 1944 Supported the allied landing at Cape Sansapor (New Guinea)

11 September 1944 Provided shore bombardment for the Morotai landings (Halmahera Sea). She was part of the invasion fleet securing airfields for the push toward the Philippines, helping to clear Japanese forces from the Dutch East Indies as Allied forces advanced northward in the Pacific war.

Leyte Gulf, Luzon and Borneo (October 1944 – September 1945)

20 October 1944 Provided bombardment at Leyte (Philippines) beachhead for troop landings and then stood by in the covering naval force, while under constant air attack. The ensuing Battle of Leyte was to be the largest naval engagement in history.

25 October 1944 Shropshire was operating with the US 7th Fleet in the Battle of Surigao Strait (Leyte), which included US battleships and cruisers, plus HMAS Australia, and destroyers Arunta and Warramunga. Shropshire in enacting her share of the engagement fired 32 broadsides and claimed 30 hits on the Japanese battleship "Yamashiro" which was to sink. This was the last sea battle fought with capital ships.

HMAS Shropshire's 8-inch guns firing during the Morotai landings, 15 September 1944. (Australian War Memorial, 017714)

January 1945 Supported the Lingayen Gulf (Luzon) landings. Shropshire provided naval gunfire as Allied troops invaded Luzon, while under continuous air attacks for five days from kamikazes.

30 April 1945 Jim returned from Shropshire to HMAS Penguin in Balmoral, and was demobilized on 21 March 1946 after five years in the RAN

June–July 1945 Borneo Campaign: Joined Australian 6th Division's assault on Brunei Bay (10 June) and then the 9th Division's assault on Balikpapan (1 July). She bombarded shore defenses at Borneo as part of the Australian-led operations to secure oil installations and cut Japanese forces off in Dutch Borneo

2 September 1945 Shropshire was Australia's most powerful ship at the close of the war and was present in Tokyo Bay as Australia's flagship for the Japanese signing of the surrender, marking the end of World War II.

Battle Honours and Service Context

Throughout these campaigns, Shropshire earned five battle honours:

- New Guinea 1943–44
- Leyte Gulf 1944
- Lingayen Gulf 1945
- Borneo 1945
- Pacific 1945

Shropshire Post-War and Fate

After Japan's surrender, Shropshire repatriated Australian troops from New Guinea and Japan (arriving in Sydney with veterans on 30 November 1945). In May 1946 she transported Australian WWII veterans to London for victory celebrations. Shropshire was decommissioned on 10 November 1949 and finally was sold for scrap in 1954 and broken up.

Scharnhorst – Life on the Other Side of the Mirror

Author: Jim Yeomans
Published: September 1991 edition of the Naval Historical Review

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He must have been a lot like me; same age, similar family conditions, same era and enjoying his life.

My introduction to him quite recently was via his younger sister Esther, an indirect relation of sorts to my family. Esther and her daughter had formed part of the crew on the boat we'd hired for our holiday. After a week on the water, Esther's daughter had driven us to their comfortable home for a short stay. The two-storey house had long ago been a restaurant. My room was in the attic; "Don't bump your head going up the stairs!"

I slept in the room which had been that of Esther's favourite brother. I already knew something of him and the fact that he had been in the Navy. The single bed was made from heavy timber and was fixed to the wall. The house was set in semi-rural surroundings and the view from the window was pleasant, encompassing a spacious backyard with interesting trees and shrubs and a clothes-line at the far end. Nearby was a practice course for Olympic style horse jumping.

Knowing that I was well aware of her brother's naval background Esther proudly produced his Number 1 uniform which she cherished. After almost 50 years it still looked as spic and span as the first day he proudly wore it. As

we settled in she hesitantly brought forth souvenirs and some photographs and finally her brother's photo album. Looking at them in the room in which he had once lived, I discovered how alike we had been. I had never met him but I felt I knew him so well and felt 'tuned in' to him. We would have got along so well!

Adolf Hitler making an inspection on board Scharnhorst. (Jim Yeomans)

The photographs started in the training depot – some with the recruits marching ('square bashing'), rifle drill with steel helmet, some with his mates off-duty. Then, just as with myself, he had been so proud to be drafted to an impressive fighting ship. Pictures of 'his ship' – gleaming paintwork, his captain and exec. officer striding along the spotless deck, deep in conversation, with assorted officers and ratings in the background. Pictures of momentous visits by a dignitary and various admirals (just as I had treasured photos of King George VI and Admiral Ramsay at Scapa Flow onboard my ship *Shropshire*). Then the War had become serious and there were big seas breaking over the bow, gun muzzles shooting flame and smoke, just as I have in my album.

Strangely, the code-name for the biggest operation in which he took part was 'Cerberus'! No need to further spell out that name for most RAN sailors. After 'Operation Cerberus' his beloved ship was inactive for a considerable

time and at that stage, I'm not sure whether he volunteered or was drafted, he went to a more active small 'boat'. There were a few more happy pictures with this small craft, some pictures of the 'boat' itself and then … no more. 'Missing presumed dead' was the communication to his grieving sister; he was just 23 years old.

His Majesty King George VI inspecting ship's company on HMAS Shropshire, Scapa Flow, 1943. (Australian War Memorial, 304656)

As with my favourite ship, the first initial of his first love was 'S' – in fact, *Scharnhorst* – what we called a battlecruiser and my friend Siegfried called 'Schlachtschif – a mighty 26,000 tons, 741 feet long, with nine 11'' guns, twelve 5.9's, 14 – 4''. 'Operation Cerberus' was the code-name for the break-out from Brest by *Scharnhorst*, sister ship *Gneisenau* and the heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen*. His photographs had included Adolf Hitler, Gros Admiral Raeder and where mine had shown *Shropshire* in steaming equatorial conditions, his showed *Scharnhorst* with icicles dripping from the mighty triple turrets and the ship forcing its way through ice! The last photographs showed his last small 'boat' – the U.155.

I'm sure we could have had a great 'natter' – we had so much in common … but, if we had inadvertently met some 48 years ago – we would have tried to

Siegfried on U.155 (second from left, front row). (Jim Yeomans)

kill each other! What madness!

Siegfried was very proud of the manner in which his side handled 'Operation Cerberus' and rightly so. Details of the break-out do not reflect a lot of credit on our side. The break-out commenced at Brest on 11 February, 1942 at 9.30 pm – two hours behind schedule because of a raid by 16 Wellington bombers on the port. A break-out up the Channel was considered suicidal and never taken as a possibility. First sighting of the three big ships was made by a Spitfire at 10.42 am the next day and at first not taken seriously. The first attack was a suicidal one by six torpedo carrying Swordfish, 90 mph 'Flying String Bags' escorted by only 10 Spitfires instead of the 5 squadrons ordered. None of the pilots had been told the nature of their target. All Swordfish were destroyed and only five of the 18 crew members survived.

At 2.31 pm (12th), *Scharnhorst* hit a mine and Admiral Cileax transferred to destroyer Z.29, unnecessarily as it turned out, because the big ship was underway again at 3 pm and soon worked up to 27 knots. The old destroyers HMS *Campbell*, *Mackay, Vivacious, Whitshed* and *Worcester* made a torpedo attack at 3.45 pm, lasting 11 minutes, with no result but *Worcester* was badly disabled and barely managed to limp back to port with 130 casualties. These destroyers were given a very trying time by RAF bombers!

Scharnhorst, Kielhaven winter, 1940. (Jim Yeomans)

At 7.55 pm (12th), near Friesian Islands, *Gneisenau* hit a mine and was holed on the starboard side, but the damage was slight and it was underway again only half an hour later.

Just 10 miles from the Dutch coast at 9.35 pm, *Scharnhorst* hit a second mine which damaged the starboard main engine, and although it lost all communications, was moving again just 35 minutes later. At 1 am (13th) the British admitted that the big German ships were safe. HMS *Shropshire* had been in the area but taken no part.

Ultimately, *Gneisenau* was smashed in dry dock at Kiel by RAF bombers on 25th & 27th February and was eventually towed to Gydnia (Poland), filled with concrete and used as a block-ship fort. On 23rd February, *Prinz Eugen* was torpedoed by submarine HMS *Trident*, never went to sea again and was eventually destroyed in 1948 in atomic tests at Bikini Atoll.

After long periods of inactivity, brought about by Hitler's reluctance to expose his big ships to British warships, on 26th December, 1943, *Scharnhorst* was eventually cornered by the cruisers *Norfolk* and *Belfast* who held her on radar off North Cape until the arrival of the modern battle-ship *Duke of York* which smashed it with 14'' guns. It was eventually sunk by torpedoes from *Jamaica*. Only 36 survivors from the crew of 1,940 men were plucked from the icy seas.

It appears that Siegfried's life would have been prolonged for only a short period had he remained with his beloved ship!